CHRIST IN THE HOME - 1

BY

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(A Translation from the French)

TO JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH

THE HOLY FAMILY - THAT THEY MAY OBTAIN FOR THE WORLD
THE GRACE OF MANY FAMILIES
WHO KEEP CHRIST IN THE HOME

PREFACE

A HOME ruled by the spirit of Christ is a happy home. It is also a school of virtue directed to spiritual transformation in Christ.

But Christ does not force His entry into a home. He enters only by invitation. He remains only when evidently welcome.

It is the wise bride and groom who let Him know by their spiritual preparation for marriage that they want Him to accompany them from the altar of their vows into the home they are about to establish. It is the wise husband and wife who let Him know they want Him always present by striving to put on His mind and to establish their family according to His principles.

In such a home, husband and wife and children will enjoy gladness of heart, happiness in the fulfillment of duty, and intense union of souls.

The strength and honor of the family come above all from within, from union with Christ which gives power to manifest in daily living the beautiful family virtues of patience, energy, generosity, forbearance, cheerfulness, and mutual reverence with their consequent effect of peace and contentment.

This book is an invitation to the married or those about to marry, to spend the interior effort required to unite them solidly in Christ and to make them worthy transmitters of the Christ-life to their family. It is an invitation to fulfill the high purpose of their marriage which is to help each other to sanctity and to rear saints for heaven; to possess Christ themselves as completely as possible and to give Christ to their children.

Now sanctity is the result of personal cooperation with grace. It is no passive attainment. Equally true is it that spiritual truths and principles merely known but not realized are of little force in stimulating spiritual energy and effort. Consequently this book of spiritual readings makes no attempt to present fully developed meditations. It is not to be a substitute for personal reflection and prayer. Its various topics are presented as points of departure into deeper realms of thought and prayer; by the personal following through of the ideas offered, conviction and realization will be achieved and lives transformed. A stronger bond of communication will be established between the soul and God resulting

in real prayer and not prayers said. The affections made will be the outpouring of the individual's response to God and not someone else's pre-planned expression of what that response ought to be.

The essential thing is to talk over the subjects with God. It is important then to enter into His Presence before each reading by a reverent act of recollection; to beg His light to see the truth and His strength to act on conviction and realization. It is important to see; it is more important to will.

The points offered for prayerful consideration are not meant to carry the reader into the clouds of elevated speculation and theory but rather to direct the soul to study prayerfully the daily, common, routine elements of his life in order to lift them out of possible monotony and deadening repetition into the challenging and absorbing adventure of making them divine.

This book in no way presumes to replace what should be for all Christians the two essential meditation books—the Gospels and the Missal. In fact, it presupposes that its readers are Christians accustomed to live in the spirit of Our Lord's life according to the rhythm of the liturgy. It endeavors to provide variety and to bring into practical application some of the lessons hidden in the Gospels or the Missal.

Of vital importance is it, no matter what the meditation book, to draw from the little that one reads a maximum of nourishment for the soul. That is not impossible. All one need do is to beg God for His grace and to co-operate with the grace that He gives.

Such a manifestation of good will is a sincere invitation to Christ and a convincing proof that He is welcome in your life.

CHRIST WILL ENTER YOUR HOME

HE WILL REMAIN TO DWELL WITH YOU

INTRODUCTORY READINGS

THE SAINT OF MODERN TIMES

FORMERLY when people dreamed of sanctity or even of the interior life, they aspired to one thing only—to get away from the world, to go off to the desert, or at least to the priesthood or the religious state. To become a saint in the world, to acquire a true and profound union with God in the world, to exercise oneself in the practice of complete abnegation, and to pursue perfection in the world seemed scarcely possible.

People are beginning to realize better that there is such a thing as sanctity in the world.

We honor those who follow a priestly vocation or a consecrated life in religion. They have chosen the better part which will not be taken from them.

But are we to conclude therefore that the laity, because they live in the world, because they have entered the married state, must be content with a cheaper view of perfection? Must assume that the practice of the highest virtues is not for them? That they may not aspire to divine union and the secret joys of a valiant fidelity inspired by love?

Fortunately there are many who realize the falsity of such a conclusion. Saint Francis de Sales challenged the laity to strive for high sanctity.

“The world of today longs to contemplate the saint of modern times who will take his place beside the ancient and venerable figures of our history,” observes Rademacher, the author of “Religion and Life.” “It demands the saintly man of the world who unites harmoniously in his personality all the aspects of a noble humanism established on correct values, entirely impregnated with a living faith, a strong love of God, and a supple, joyous participation in the life of the Church.... There ought to be even now on this earth a type of saintly employee, saintly merchant, saintly industrialist, saintly peasant, saintly wife, saintly woman of Christian culture and refinement. The saint’s role in the world today is to be the pioneer of the new family, of the new State, of the new Society, of the new humanity, of the Kingdom of God which is always new.”

No profession is of itself an obstacle to holiness. No state of life is an obstacle; and marriage, if rightly understood, not only demands holiness but leads those who fulfill all its requirements to true sanctity.

In trying to picture what the saint of the next centuries should be, Foerster, a Protestant author, did not hesitate to write: “Just as in former times the saint was characterized by his courage to confess his faith and die a martyr, since he held faith to be his highest ideal for which he must be willing to suffer; just as the saint of the Middle Ages and even of our own day, has been characterized by virginity, since then and now, and especially in our times, it requires a struggle to conquer many temptations to preserve personal purity; so perhaps the saint of the centuries to come will be the perfect wife or husband, since the vital ideal for which we should willingly suffer today is the sacredness of marriage.”

There is much truth in these words. It may be though that the age of martyrs is not so far distant as the author would have us believe. And consecrated virginity, thank God, continues to hold a strong appeal for many souls. But is Foerster not pathetically correct in stating that saints in married life, in conjugal fidelity, are a crying need of our age to counteract the attacks on the family and notably the attacks on the indissolubility of marriage?

What thirst consumes me as I begin this book of spiritual readings? Is it the thirst for sanctity? How far am I willing to go?

Let me gauge the measure of my desire, of my sincerity.

SANCTITY OF THE LAITY

THE author of the so-called *"Precepts of Contemporary Philosophy"* may have been trying to be witty when some years before the war broke out in 1939 he wrote the following comment on sanctity:

"Sanctity: An idolistic word no longer having any more than historical interest. Civil and military society has preserved its heroes; religious society has lost its saints or, if any more of them remain, we no longer hear them mentioned.... The age of great Christian fervor has indeed passed away.... Without wanting to appear sacrilegious, I believe that the Catholic faith would have difficulty finding martyrs thoroughly convinced of their faith and ready to sacrifice themselves for it even to death."

True, heroic virtue is rare and where it does exist, it makes so little noise! How much real sanctity there is! Sanctity which may never be officially canonized but real just the same: the sanctity of a doctor who spends himself for the love of God and for the suffering members of Christ without counting the cost; the sanctity of a servant who lives her life of obedience and continual renunciation humbly and in a supernatural spirit—multiple types of sanctity, hidden and unknown but effective and a delight to the Heart of God. We should of course like to see sanctity more widespread, but we must not deny what already exists.

Furthermore, opportunities for martyrdom are not of general occurrence, and sanctity adorned by the martyr's palm is not the only kind of sanctity. As Rene Bazin so truly wrote: "Men do not seem to recognize the sacrifice of life unless it is made all at once." Martyrdom by the little fires of hidden fidelities constantly adhered to, of tormenting temptations courageously and perseveringly repulsed, of the exact and loving fulfillment of duties toward God and neighbor, of prayer faithfully practiced despite disgust, aridity and the pressure of work—is it not a martyrdom? Who can estimate the value of its countless offerings which are not publicized but which cost . . . and which count!

The amount of sanctity in the world today is not the essential problem; the important question is how much there ought to be, what the needs of the world demand, what the glory of God and Christianity well understood require.

Speaking one day with a group of cardinals, the Holy Father Pius X put this question to them: "In your opinion, what is the most vital need for the salvation of society?"

"To build schools," answered one cardinal. "No."

"To build more churches," suggested another.

"No again."

"To increase the number of priests," said a third.

"No, no," replied Pius X. "All those things are important, but what is most necessary at present is to have in every parish a group of lay people who are very virtuous, very determined, enlightened in their faith and who are true apostles."

Let us consider now just the two words “virtuous” and “determined.”

The Holy Father said “virtuous”—“very virtuous” and he was speaking of lay people.

Do I belong to that number of virtuous lay people?

“What luck not to be a saint!” Doctor Vittoz of Lausanne used to say, “For then I can exert myself to become one!”

Pius X had good reason to add the word “determined” to the word “virtuous.” Is my resolution to reach high sanctity resolute, determined?

FANTASY OR SACRED DUTY

IN his interesting book, *“Man the Unknown,”* Alexis Carrel makes this statement:

“Each individual is set by the conditions of his development upon the road which will lead him either to the solitary mountains or to the mud of the swamps where humanity contents itself.”

If not rightly understood, this statement might imply that, by a sort of pre-established harmony over which we have no control, we are inevitably directed in spite of ourselves either toward the heights or toward the lowlands.

It could be that because of inherited tendencies, family traditions, examples we may have witnessed, or the training we have received, we are more strongly drawn either to laziness or to generosity. However, everyone has the duty on his own responsibility to make himself what he ought to be. The problem of salvation and the degree of sanctity to be attained is essentially an individual problem. We save ourselves or we damn ourselves; we conquer ourselves or we let ourselves be conquered—these are all personal verbs.

“Everyone has the duty,” that is the reality. It is not a matter of satisfying a fantasy, a more or less poetic taste for the heights. So much the better if the heights tempt me! So much the worse for me if I am the prey of a positive spirit of low ideals. I do not have to strive for the Christian ideal simply because of a certain forceful subjective attraction. No, I have an obligation to strive for it and this obligation springs from the Gospel command, a command given to all, Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Am I perhaps too much in the habit of seeing in the Gospel only the restrictions it imposes upon me? Of viewing religion from the negative side? I must accustom myself to consider the Gospel from the positive aspect—the call to sanctity. The capital problem for the Christian who wants to be a real Christian is not the problem of sin but the problem of perfection.

Not to fall back!

Much more and much better—to rise.

In the “Journal of Salavin” by George Duhamel, Salavin laments in self-disgust, “How can one resign himself to being only what one is and how try to be other than what one is.” Then he declares, “After some indefinite time, I am going to go away.” “And where are you going?”

“Nowhere.”

Evading—when it should be a matter of ascending.

For me as a Christian, the road is known. I know where to go. And the instructions are clear. Someone expressed them in three points:

- To commit this year the least number of sins possible.
- To acquire this year the most virtues possible.
- To do to others the most good possible.

Here is a program that will not only avoid the abyss but lead to the heights.

MY PERSONAL VOCATION

NOTHING is more interesting and at the same time more stirring than to study my particular role in the eternal destinies of the world . . . what God from all eternity has planned for me . . . what kind of saint He wants me to be . . . by what combination and sequence of circumstances He established me where I am . . . all He has given me—a Christian country, a Christian family, a Christian education, numberless graces exterior as well as interior, the Sacraments, interior inspirations, invitations to mount spiritually—and then to discover in what degree He intends to use me to lead other souls to salvation and perfection.

Religion in spirit and in truth—what is it? It consists in participating in the very sanctity of God Himself in my own personal life, and in cooperating with God to bring grace into the lives of others and to help keep them to grow in the divine life.

There is no question then of eternity forcing its way into my existence without my opening the door to it; it permeates me from within in keeping with the freedom I give it.

Nor must I be aiming only at my own sanctification. I have the responsibility of souls, not only the souls of my own but of multitudes who are in some way connected with my soul. The salvation of the world depends in part on the saint that I become.

One author puts this thought very well. "Each being in the universe must act with the consciousness of having been chosen for a task that he alone can accomplish. As soon as he discovers what this task is and he begins to dedicate himself to it, he can be sure that God is with him and that He watches over him. Let him be full of confidence and joy! He is associated with the work of creation." And we might add "with the work of redemption." This ought to be a continual marvel to him that weak and sinful though he knows himself to be he is nonetheless called, unquestionably called, to an action of unique value, to the exaltation of the divine in himself and the propagation and the extension of the divine in humanity!

I ought to try to realize ever more deeply the tremendous significance of my personal vocation; to consider the degree and the kind of sanctity to which I am called; to measure the extent of the field where my zeal for souls is to labor—the family, the parish, the city....

Everything in my life should be referred to God. As Saint Augustine said, *"Totum exigit te qui fecit te."* (He from whom you received all things demands all.) I must therefore make the gifts He bestowed on me serve for His glory alone. I should not deny these gifts, nor store them away; on the contrary, I should exploit them, but for Him. To quote Saint Augustine again, "Let everything useful that I learned as a child be consecrated to Your service, O my God. Let it be for Your service that I speak, that I read,

that I write, that I count!" He did not renounce the use of his mind, the exercise of his intelligence, the application of his profane sciences but he subordinated all to spreading the glory of God and extending his apostolate for souls.

I can be inspired to a like rule of life. I can use human gifts as well as divine gifts to attain the highest peak of my vocation. I am not what my neighbor is and my neighbor is not what I am. I have a role to fill and no one else but me can fill it.

I must know my capital and prudently determine my investments.

WHAT KIND OF SOUL AM I?

SOMEONE has said, "All beings receive the same light but all accept it unequally. Some are like white surfaces and they shed the light all about them; these souls have the most innocence. Others are like black surfaces and they enfold the light in their own darkness; these souls are like closed coffers. Then again some divide the light keeping part for themselves and reflecting the rest as do surfaces of variegated colors and, like these same colored surfaces, change the intensity of light and shadows according to the time of day; these are the most sensitive souls. There are others who like transparent surfaces let all the light pass through them retaining nothing of it; these souls are nearest to God. Some might be compared to mirrors in which all nature and the people who look at them never cease to see themselves and to reflect themselves; these souls are nearest us and their presence alone suffices to judge us. Some make us thing of prisms in which the white light is spread out into the rainbow colors of the spectrum...."

In which class do I belong?

I need not indulge in morbid or vain introspection but try merely to get a clear view of God's intentions concerning me. I know the Parable of the Talents. I must not envy the riches of another but determine exactly the capital that God asks me to exploit for His greater glory, for my own sanctification, for the good of all souls with whom my sanctification is bound up, from those nearest to me even to the most distant at the other end of the world. *Tu quis es?* "Who are you?" the judges asked Our Lord, *Et quid dicis de teipso,* "and what do you say of yourself?"

Who am I? The mystery of each personality! It is a mystery which even the most perfect and most intimate union with another personality cannot completely pierce, as for example in marriage. There is a limitless diversity in personalities, since God made all souls originally without ever copying any previous model. How delightful this variety is: rose, anemone, violet; an extraordinary medley, gradations without limit of cut or of color....

Who am I? What are my resources? What are my good points? What are my faults? What is the color of my desires, the force of my will, the intensity of my religious need, my thirst for an integrated life, my Christian fervor, the value of my fidelity?

Who am I? That is a different question from what I say I am or what I give to understand that I am. No, I am not a hypocrite; I do not seek to deceive for the sake of deceiving. But I am like everybody else and, without wanting to, without directly saying it, I fix up the pages of my country's history—I try to let myself be seen only under the most glorious aspects. People believe me to be better than I am. In any case they have a different opinion of me from what I really am.

Who am I? And what difference is there between what I am actually and what I let others discover of my person and my intimate self?

Saint Augustine prayed, “Lord, let me know myself, let me know Thee.” He desired nothing else. I want to make that my prayer too.

MARRIAGE

BEFORE EMBARKING (1)

WHOEVER desires to marry ought to prepare himself for that great step:

First of all, by preserving chastity and then, by praying much for his future home and family.

By preserving chastity, whoever cannot see the need for this will not be likely to understand the need for anything.

But one must be able to see the need for more than this, to desire more.

The practice of purity in its entirety involves not only the avoidance of serious wrongdoing harmful to the integrity of the body but also whatever sullies imagination, thought or desire. Consequently questionable companions, flirtations, and imprudent reading are out of the question. Custody of the eyes is essential. Death enters in through the windows of the body. Eve and David both sinned through their eyes.

For certain temperaments, such vigilance demands great generosity. No one can deny it.

“The good is more difficult than the evil,” wrote Paul Claudel in response to Jacques Riviere who had explained that to remain pure was difficult. “But there is a return. The good opens up before us incomparable horizons because it alone is in keeping with our reality, our nature, our life and our vocation. This is particularly true where love is concerned. How ridiculous the romantic fever of a purely fleshly love seems to me!”

Sensing the old classic objection in his correspondent, Claudel took the offensive:

“As for the emotional cramping Christianity imposes upon you, I can scarcely understand what you mean. When you speak of sins, I suppose you refer to sins of the flesh, because I cannot imagine that you have any tendency to drunkenness, avarice, acts of violence or similar things.

“The first answer to your difficulty is that when we become Christians, it is not for our pleasure or personal comfort, and further, if God does us the honor of asking sacrifice of us, there is nothing to do but consent with joy.

“The second answer is that these sacrifices amount to very little or practically nothing. We are still living in the old romantic idea that the supreme happiness, the greatest interest, the only delight of existence consists in our relations with women and in the sensual satisfactions we get from them. But we forget one fact, the fact that the soul, the spirit, are realities just as strong, just as demanding as the flesh—even more so; we forget that if we accord to the flesh everything it demands, we shall do so with the consequent loss of other joys, other regions of delight which will be eternally closed for us. We shall be draining a glass of bad wine in a hovel or in a drawing room and be unmindful of that virginal sea

which stretches out before others under the rising sun.”

How splendidly Shakespeare has expressed the same thoughts:

What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?

A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy. Who buys a minute’s mirth to wail a week? Or sees eternity to get a toy?

For one sweet grape who will the wine destroy?

Or, what fond beggar, but to touch the crown, Would with the scepter straight be strucken down? (Rape of Lucrece, Stanza 31)

This is also what Saint Augustine has written in his own epigrammatic style: momentaneum quod delectat, aeternum quod cruciat. One instant of pleasure, an eternity of suffering....

Let me examine my own soul. Have I come to marriage entirely chaste? Chaste in body? Chaste in thought? Chaste in heart?

If my answer is Yes, then I must thank God. It is a choice grace.

If my answer is No, then what can I do to make reparation, to obtain from God the grace of entire fidelity to my duty, from now on?

BEFORE EMBARKING (2)

IN addition to the preservation of chastity, the person aspiring to marriage has a second great duty—to pray much.

An old proverb wisely states, “Before embarking on the sea, pray once. Before leaving for war, pray twice. Before marrying, pray three times.”

And this necessity of praying more before marriage than before a voyage or a battle is evident for several reasons. Consider the risk of associating oneself closely with a creature who has many limitations; with a creature about whom one knows very little particularly in the matter of shortcomings, since during the period of courtship and betrothal one unconsciously does everything not to reveal himself; with a creature whom one loves with all one’s heart but who possesses not only lovable traits, but also faults which can cause suffering; with a creature who can bestow the greatest joy, but who can also unfortunately inflict the deepest pain.

Furthermore, in order to bear joys as well as possible trials, do we not need much help from God? And to obtain this help, must we not pray much?

Another reason for the necessity of such prayer when one desires to establish a home is that from a union once sanctioned by the Church and consummated there is no possible withdrawal. It is a choice which is definitely established. For two changeable human beings to dare to bind themselves to each other forever in a relationship so intimate as the realities of marriage, is not God’s sustaining help a prime requisite? And to obtain this help is it not necessary to pray much?

Has my life before marriage been one of sanctification and of prayer in preparation for my marriage? Or have I confided solely in the human merits existing on both sides and neglected to place under God’s

protection the union I was about to contract?

If I have been neglectful, I must make up for it now. There is still time.

If, on the contrary, I prayed much before my marriage, I may not leave off earnest prayer now that I am married. The greater the place God holds in my life, the greater can be my assurance that my home shall be supernaturally happy and, without a doubt, humanly happy as well.

"To you, O Mary, my good Mother, I confide my marriage and my home. It seems that marriage is the means of sanctification destined for me by God as it is for the chosen soul whom you have given me.

"Together we shall do our best to glorify God—this is our firm resolution. Bless us, help us, strengthen us. Sailors call you Stella Maris. Be for us, too, the Star of the Sea and keep us safe throughout our crossing; we put under your care our vessel and its crew. You shall be the Queen on board ship."

REQUISITES FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE

FOR a happy marriage, it is necessary, of course, that the engaged couple find each other congenial and enjoy each other's company.

They must agree to share loyally the joys and the sorrows of wedded union and fulfill its obligations.

Each one must be bent on procuring for the other as much happiness as possible and oblige himself beforehand to a mode of life which will disturb his partner as little as possible.

The husband must love his profession, and his wife should share this love or at least neglect nothing in order to respect and facilitate it.

They should be able to make their decisions together, not certainly without sometimes having recourse to the counsels of competent authorities, but with a beautiful and joyful independence of any member of the family who may be too prone at times to attempt to domineer over the young couple. There should, of course, be no presumption, no narrow aloofness, but a serene and supple liberty of spirit; serene and supple humility.

In order to be able to practice the sanctity of their state in all the details of their life, they must understand their duty of leaning upon God. It will not be sufficient to link together their two wills; they must be determined to pray to obtain help from on High.

They must likewise have a certain concern, a legitimate concern, for physical charm, without, however, losing sight of the fact that beauty of soul is superior to beauty of body; so that if some day the physical attraction should diminish, they will not be less eager to remain together, but each will strive to find in the other the quality upon which profound union is established.

Both of them must love children. They must develop in themselves to the best of their ability the virtues necessary for parenthood, t he courage to accept as many children as God wants them to have and the wisdom to rear them well— difficult virtues requiring strong souls.

Each must be possessed of a rich power of cordiality for the members of the other's family. Both must resolve to take their in-laws and their household as they find them, and adopt as a principle for their contacts with them, It was not to share hates but to share love that I entered into your family. Consequently, they must refuse to be drawn into family quarrels, seeking rather in all their actions to

promote charity, union, and peace.

Even before their marriage, the young couple should decide to keep their expenses at a minimum, according to their situation, not with avarice or niggardliness, but with the desire to live in the gospel spirit of detachment from the goods of earth. Such judicious economy, which should of course be devoid of even the appearance of stinginess, will enable them to set aside something useful and necessary for their children. It will also enable them to relieve the misery around them.

It is to be assumed that both individuals contemplating marriage have the requisite health, since marriage has been created not only for mutual support but also to transmit life.

It is further to be assumed that each of the two has kept nothing of his past life hidden from the other, and that in view of this entire loyalty which is so desirable a trait in married couples, each has kept himself pure and refrained from dangerous experiences.

A PROPOSAL

LOUIS PASTEUR came from a family of modest means. When he was twenty-six years old, his astonishing discovery in regard to crystals drew upon him the attention of scientists.

In 1849, he was named assistant professor in the University of Strasbourg. The rector of the university, Mr. Laurent, had three daughters. Fifteen days after Pasteur's first visit, he asked for Marie in marriage. The young scientist felt that this young woman understood life as he did and wanted the same kind of life he sought—a life of simplicity, of work, and of goodness. He sent this letter to Mr. Laurent:

"Sir, a request of great significance for me and for your family will be addressed to you in a few days and I believe it my duty to give you the following information which can help to determine your acceptance or your refusal.

"My father is a tanner at Arbois, a little city in the Jura region. My sisters keep house for my father since we had the sorrow of losing our mother last May. My family is in comfortable circumstances, but not wealthy. I do not evaluate what we own at more than ten thousand dollars. As for me, I decided long ago to leave my whole share to my sisters. I, then, have no fortune. All I possess is good health, a kind heart, and my position in the university.

"Two years ago I was graduated from l'Ecole Normale with the degree of agrege in the physical sciences. Eighteen months ago I received my doctorate, and I have presented some of my works to the Academy of Science where they were very well received, especially my last one. I have the pleasure of forwarding to you with this letter a very favorable report about this particular work of mine.

"That describes my present status. As for the future, all I can say is that unless I should undergo a complete change in my tastes, I shall devote myself to chemical research. It is my ambition to return to Paris when I have acquired a reputation through my work. Monsieur Biot has spoken to me several times to persuade me seriously to consider the Institute. In ten or fifteen years I shall perhaps be able to consider it seriously if I work assiduously. This dream is but wasted trouble; it is not that at all which makes me love science as science."

Could a more modest, more completely sincere letter ever be sent by a young man in love?

And when he addressed himself to Marie he assured her with touching clumsiness that he was sure he

could hardly be attractive for a young girl, but just let her have a little patience and she would learn his great love for her and he believed she would love him too, for “my memories tell me that when I have been very well known by persons, they have loved me.”

But great as was his love for Marie, his heart was divided:

Louis Pasteur loved science, he loved his crystals. He began to scruple about it, and finally wrote to his fiancée, asking her “not to be jealous if science took precedence over her in his life.”

She was not jealous. Madame Pasteur married not only the man but also his passion for science. Her love had that rare quality of knowing how to efface itself, and to manifest itself precisely by not manifesting itself at all at times. She was a worthy companion of this great man, of this great scientist, of this great heart.

THE END OF LOVE?

A CERTAIN essayist makes this appalling statement: “What a sad age this is in which one makes his First Holy Communion to be through with religion, receives his bachelor’s degree to be through with studying, and marries to be through with love.”

Let us omit the first two statements from this consideration and take up the third.

Is it true that for some, marriage is the end of love?

That statement can be taken in different ways.

Some think that before marriage one can play at love. Then when the senses have been dulled, one shall try to find a companion for himself. “Youth must pass,” people say condescendingly on observing the looseness of young men. There are even certain pseudo-moralists who advise young girls not to marry before “deliberately having their fling as well as the boys”—advice which unfortunately some of them do not fail to follow.

This is an odious concept of love and marriage or of preparation for it. I certainly want none of it.

Again there are those who think that love is all well and good before marriage. As for marriage itself, it is first and foremost an investment. The problem is not so much to marry someone for whom one experiences a strong attraction, but rather to realize a good business deal. It is not the person one seeks, but the name, the status, the fortune. There is nothing of love in this. No, indeed, it is all a matter of interest: a concept equally as odious as the first, equally repellent.

What the author of the statement probably meant is that before marriage, the young man and woman are all fire and flame, and perhaps for a short time after marriage. Soon, or at least comparatively soon after marriage, they no longer speak of love. They have become two under the yoke—two bearing the necessary restraints of their united existences. Gone is the enchantment of betrothal days or of the early days of married life. There is nothing left but the grayish prose of humdrum existence with an individual of whom one has made a god or a goddess—a person who is after all only a poor creature.

- A man, “a poor man who eats, drinks, wears shirts and drawers, and who loses his buttons,” as someone jokingly described him. “A man who will never be able to find anything in a dresser or clothes closet; who will never appreciate the cooking or the menu; who at night throws his clothes in

a heap on a chair and the next morning complains that the creases in his trousers are not pressed in well enough; a man who formerly seemed like a knight, a magician, a prince charming, and whose bold gestures so commanding yet so delicate thrilled the heart and stirred one's whole being, causing one's imagination to crown him with the aureola of perfection," and who now . . .

- A woman, a poor creature indeed, perpetually thirsting for caresses even at the most inappropriate times; a woman who has foolish notions, headaches, fits of humor; who manifests a flare for spending which can never resist the appeal of any show window, particularly if there is an interesting clearance sale on; a woman who wants a wardrobe capable of ruining the most industrious man, the wealthiest husband—a poor sort of woman, indeed!

Is it not because of all these things, at least partially because of them, that Our Lord wanted to make marriage a rite giving divine graces—a sacrament?

Perhaps we have exaggerated the poetry of conjugal life; let us not now exaggerate the prose of life together.

As a preparation for this prose, which is always possible and often very real even in the most successful marriages, I shall aim to sanctify myself in the practice of charity and patience.

ONE ONLY BEING

"LOVE seeks to escape through a single being from the mediocrity of all others." This is the definition one author gives of love.

It is not a matter of reviewing all human beings with whom one comes into contact as if they were on parade, so that with methodical, rational, and cold discernment one might pick out the chosen man or woman. It is not a selection; the object of one's desire attracts at once; it is just he or she; all the rest do not exist. As one writer put it, "Love is monotheistic." There is no need at all of overthrowing idols; one pedestal alone stands, bearing the holy representation that the eyes feast upon and toward which the heart turns with an irresistible impulse.

Oh, the incomprehensible power of the heart in love promptly to divinize the poor reality it has chosen! Nothing else exists for it any longer! In the play "Asmodee," by Mauriac, the heroine Emmanuelle, who had thought of religious life until she met Harry with whom she fell deeply in love at first sight, goes so far as to declare:

"You know when I used to hear a person say of someone, "He is everything for me," I did not know what that meant. I know now. Our pastor tells me that husbands and wives love each other in God. I can't understand that. It seems to me that if Harry were some day to be everything for me, then there would no longer be any room in my heart or in my life for anyone, not even for God."

Aside from this particular example of Emmanuelle, there is some truth in those words; they emphasize a well- known fact.

How many young girls during their engagement period, how many young wives in the months following upon their marriage, neglect the spiritual, overwhelmed as they are with human happiness! Previous to that time, all their love, all the need they felt for giving themselves was directed to divine realities. Their capacity for tenderness was showered upon Jesus and Mary; it was fed in Holy Communion.

Now another object engages all their concern. They must be vigilant that their piety does not diminish. Their needs have increased; it is not the time to decrease their cultivation of holiness. Doubtless, and above all in the case of a married woman, some spiritual exercises will not be possible; for example, daily Holy Mass and Holy Communion in certain cases will have to be sacrificed through fidelity to duty in their new state. But piety itself must not diminish as it so often does in a period of human happiness.

It is essential in the midst of marital joys, and above all in the joys preceding marriage or following immediately upon it, to strive to preserve a sense of balance and of true values. Love of God does not operate exactly as the attraction of creatures. In the one case, it is a question of an invisible reality; in the other, of a sensible reality. This last, even though closer and more accessible, never eclipses the first. Esteem as divine what is divine, and do not knowingly divinize or, more correctly speaking, transfigure to excess a creature, no matter how rich its gifts.

Remain if possible always in truth. Realize that God alone is God, and that every created being has its limitations. Strive to make your limitations and your mediocrity as little felt as possible and generously pardon the limitations and mediocrity of your companion for life.

The earth shall never be anything but the earth; it is untimely to try to make it heaven.

LOVE

Why does a woman desire a man? Why does a man desire a woman? What is the explanation of that mysterious attraction which draws the two sexes toward each other?

Will anyone ever be able to explain it? Will anyone be able to exhaust the subject?

One fact is certain: Even aside from the physiological aspect of the problem, the effeminate man does not attract a woman; she makes fun of him, finds him ridiculous. So too the masculine woman weakens her power of attraction for a man, and ends by losing it entirely.

The age-old spell which each sex casts upon the other is closely allied to the fidelity with which each exactly fulfills its role. If woman copies man and man copies woman, there can be comradeship but love does not develop. In reality, they are nothing more than two caricatures, the woman being degraded to the rank of a man and a second-rate man at that, and the man to the rank of a manikin in woman's disguise. The more feminine a woman's soul and bearing, the more pleasing she is to a man; the more masculine a man's soul and bearing, the more pleasing he is to a woman.

We do not mean to say that between two poor specimens of either sex there will never be any casual or even lasting sexual appeal and experience. But we can hardly, if ever, call it love. If men and woman are no more than two varieties of the same sex, a sort of neuter sex, the force which creates love disappears. Normally, as we say in electrical theory, opposite charges must exist before any sparks will shoot forth. Bring into contact two identical charges and there will be no effect; electricity of opposite polarities must be used; then and then only will there be reaction.

In the realm of love, the general rule is the same. In fact, man and woman are two different worlds. And that is as it should be, so that the eternal secret which each of them encloses may become the object of the other's desire and stimulate thirst for a captivating exploration.

That is love's strange power. It brings two secrets face to face, two closed worlds, two mysteries. And just because it involves a mystery, it gives rise to limitless fantasies of the imagination, to embellishments in advance of the reality. So that

One finally loves all toward which one rows.

Whether that toward which one rows is an enchanted island or one merely believes it is, what ecstasy!

Comes the meeting, the consecration of the union by marriage; each brings to the other what the other does not possess. In the one, delicate modesty and appealing reserve; in the other, conquering bravery. A couple has been born. Love has accomplished its prodigy.

Yet, how true it is, that having said all this, we have said nothing. The reality of love is unfathomable. Could it be perhaps because it is the most beautiful masterpiece of God?

THE PALACE OF CHANCE

A MODERN writer describes marriage as "having an appointment with happiness in the palace of chance."

Two persons are complete strangers to each other. One day they meet. They think they appreciate each other, understand each other. They encounter no serious obstacles; their social position is just about the same; their financial status similar; their health seems sufficient; their parents offer no objections; they become engaged. They exchange loving commonplaces wherein nothing of the depths of their souls is revealed. The days pass; the time comes—it is their wedding day.

They are married. In the beginning of their acquaintance, they did not know each other at all. They do not know each other much better now, or at least, they do not know each other intimately. They are bound together; possible mishaps matter little to them; they are going to make happiness for themselves together. It is a risk they decided to run.

That this procedure is the method followed by many can scarcely be denied. Let us hope that we personally proceed with more prudence.

Upon the essential phases of life together, the engaged couple should hold loyal and sincere discussion. And in these discussions and exchange of ideas, each one should reveal himself as he really is, and let us hope that this revelation is one of true richness of soul.

To make a lover of a young man or young woman is not such a difficult achievement. But to discover in a young man before marriage the possibility, or better still, the assurance of a good husband who will become a father of the highest type, and in a young woman, the certain promise of the most desirable type of wife who has in her the makings of a real mother and a worthy educator—that is a masterpiece of achievement!

"To love each other before marriage! Gracious, that is simple," exclaims a character in a play, "they do not know each other! The test will be to love each other when they really do get acquainted." And he is not wrong.

In keeping with his thought is the witty answer given by a young married man to an old friend who came to visit him.

"I am an old friend of the family," explained the visitor. "I knew your wife before you married her."

"And I, unfortunately, did not know her until after I married her!"

But even when a man and woman do know each other deeply and truly before marriage, how many occasions they will still have for mutual forbearance. It is necessary for them to have daily association with each other in order to understand each other; for the woman, to understand what the masculine temperament is; for the man to understand what the feminine temperament is. That may seem like a trifling thing; yet it goes a long way toward a happy marriage. To understand each other not only as being on his part a man and on her part a woman, but as being just such a man or just such a woman, that is to say, persons who in addition to the general characteristics of their species possess particular virtues and particular faults as a result of their individual temperaments--that requires rare penetration!

A home is not drawn by lot, blindly. A palace of chance! No, indeed. If we want to turn it into a palace of happiness as far as that is possible here below, we must above all things refuse to have anything to do with chance. We must know what we are doing and where we are going.

INFINITY PROMISED

ONE of the duties of husband and wife is to pardon each other mutually for not giving infinity after practically promising it.

How much each of them expects from the other, from this union hoped for, guessed, discovered, known and loved! "Is it true, then, that the mystery of infinity is written upon this little forehead, which is all mine," sighs the man with the Hindu poet Tagore. "You are half woman and half dream."

And what a seraphim, what a dream prince and legendary hero she believes to be marrying, she whose imagination is livelier and more powerful in evoking imagery?

Ah, the sweetness of loving, the sweetness of being two to know The ineffable depths of the heart and its burning love's glow, . . . To know all that a soul holds of power to feel, To understand the eyes" great force magnetic, fair, To sob softly—my forehead pressed against your hair Because I feel so small before Love which passes.

But even in the very moment of the embrace, how difficult— impossible even—to arrive at perfect unity; physical union can be achieved, but how delicate an attainment is union of souls! As an English novelist expresses it:

"The anguish of those who love is caused by their powerlessness to surmount the barrier of their individuality. Even in love we cannot escape from the eternal solitude of ourselves. We embrace without being able to be fused into one . . . We yearn to be but one and we are always two . . . We are frustrated as two birds would be who sought to be united through a pane of glass."

Thus it is even when the two understand each other. In vain do they try to transfigure poor reality, seek to keep their idol more clearly before their vision, by closing their eyes, and by renewing marks of affection compensate for the infirmity of nature present in their very efforts at mutual tenderness; it still remains true that they always desire more than they possess; of what import is it that their substances intermingle if their consciences remain separated?

And what about those who only half understand each other or do not understand each other at all? Not

only is their intimacy no mutual exchange, but their very cohabitation accentuates their isolation all the more. The poet, Anna de Noailles, who was unhappy in her married life, expressed this idea when she said, “I am alone with someone.”

It is a suffering for two who do not love each other to be together; it is a suffering to be together if they do love each other, because they never know if they embrace all they really believe they embrace. Berdyaev, the author of *“The Destiny of Man,”* expresses this suffering of love when he says, “If unreciprocated love is tragic, reciprocated love is perhaps even more so.”

How incorrect to think that there is no matter for renunciation in marriage!

THE NUPTIAL LITURGY

ORDINARILY there is very little recollection manifested at a wedding ceremony. It is just as if the congregation had no idea of the sanctity of the place or the grandeur of the event.

Yet, all is holy.

The priest begins “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” and prays that God may bless the two about to be married so that all may redound to the glory of His Name.

Then follows the exchange of consent accompanied by the rite of joining hands. “The Lord be with you,” says the priest before blessing the ring. . .

And later, “Be unto them, O Lord, a tower of strength.” Can anything less than this Almighty protection suffice for the work of sanctification in their life together?

The Gradual of the Nuptial Mass invokes the blessing of fecundity upon the marriage. “Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of thy house. Thy children as olive plants about thy table.”

Marriage is not a union founded on chance or pure caprice; reason must control the glow of passion, and the union effected by marriage must be of such a nature that death alone can break it. The Gospel of Saint Matthew gives us Our Savior’s own words on this subject. In answer to the question, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause,” Christ answered very definitely, No, and quoted the Scripture text, “They shall be two in one flesh.” Then He made it more emphatic by adding, “What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”

At the Pater Noster of the Nuptial Mass, the priest does something he never does in any other Mass. He interrupts the Sacrifice, permits the Body and Blood of Christ to lie upon the altar, and turning, calls down a new benediction of God upon the bride and the groom. He recalls how the Most High God has watched over the sacred institution of marriage from the beginning of the world, to keep it intact in spite of the frailty of humanity. The rest of the prayer besides referring to the examples of faithful wives of the Old Testament—Rachel, Rebecca, Sarah—implores rich graces for the bride.

“O God, by whom woman is joined to man, and that fellowship which Thou didst ordain from the beginning is endowed with a blessing which alone was not taken away either by the punishment for the first sin or by the sentence of the flood; look in Thy mercy upon this Thy handmaid;

True and chaste let her wed in Christ . . .

Let the father of sin work none of his evil deeds within her… Let her be true to one wedlock and

preserve inviolable fidelity;

Let her fortify her weakness by strong discipline;

Let her be grave in demeanor and honored for her modesty. Let her be well taught in heavenly love;

Let her be fruitful in offspring."

The priest continues the Mass and receives Holy Communion. The bride and groom should also receive the Body and Blood of Christ during this Nuptial Mass. The rubrics of the missal call for it expressly. The ideal then is to communicate not at an earlier Mass but during the Nuptial Mass itself, which nothing, not even the early hour of the day, can prevent from being solemn.

Before the Last Blessing, the priest speaks once more to the newly married couple as if he could not tire of blessing them before their great departure saying, "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfill His blessing in you that you may see your children's children even to the third and fourth generation, and afterwards may you have life everlasting, by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth forever."

THE WEDDING DAY

WHAT a marvel of grandeur and of poetry is the nuptial liturgy! The Church, full of solicitude for the two daring young souls ready to launch out on the voyage of life, is eager to prepare them as seriously and as solidly as possible, to put before them essential principles, and to petition God to take this holy couple under His especial care, and conduct it to the great eternal family after their life of reciprocal love and confiding generosity.

Is it any wonder that such a noble and meaningful ceremony should bring to mind the First Mass of a newly- ordained priest?

Unfortunately, the worldly trappings that often accompany the marriage celebration detract considerably from the sacred atmosphere of the event. Particularly true is this of the banquet which is generally a part of the celebration.

The Church has nothing against wholesome joys, particularly family feasts to commemorate an outstanding occasion in life; but she certainly does not approve of the 18arousing for which wedding banquets are so frequently the excuse, or the tone of certain parties held in connection with weddings. Could anyone imagine an ordination to the priesthood celebrated in such a fashion?

After the Nuptial Mass, the world takes over, there are the congratulations, the general stir to get into the line of march in order to see and be seen; there is not a minute for prayer, for recollection, for thanksgiving. The world, even during the Mass as well as after it, assumes control of the couple and their family. Events following the marriage ceremony do nothing to correct these concessions to the world. Does it not seem reasonable that when the fundamental interests of the family are impeded by the worldly spirit, the family should do everything in its power to escape from it?

There are those who understand this: Sodalists, the Jocists, members of Catholic Action groups or similar organizations, even previous to the war, wanted to break away from these pagan practices. It is not a matter of seeing in the holy place only the Church vestibule or the Church lobby. No, no, the church is the house of God. Let everything there be holy and all that is done there be done holily, the

founding of the family more than anything else!

Those groups who recognize the sanctity of the marriage ceremony have set the example of communicating at their Nuptial Mass; they have suppressed boisterous and giddy celebrations. In the same spirit they decided to delay their departure for their honeymoon and postpone the distractions it entails; so beneficial is it to remain in prolonged recollection during their first days together. They remember to make their union of souls predominate. Therefore, together they restrain themselves and by mutual accord embrace sacrifice.

Saint Paulinus, a renowned lawyer of Bordeaux, who renounced a worldly life when he was at the height of success, and with his wife retired into the city of Nola in Campania, wrote these significant lines:

Concordes animae casto sociantur amore; Virgo puer Christi, virgo puella Dei.

"Let these souls who are one heart and soul be united in a chaste love;
he, a virgin, a son of God; she, a virgin, a daughter of God."

Why not secure for these two splendid baptized souls, these two virgin souls, whom marriage has united forever, a departure worthy of them?

TOTAL UNION

IN *"Les Vergers humains,"* Louis Lefebvre has this charming verse in which the poet addresses his wife:

I speak to God most often in my verse;
I speak to my own destiny; I speak to my own son;
With every living being, I converse
But I speak not to you; you are myself; we are but one.

There are other exquisite examples of such perfect union between husband and wife realized not only in poetry but in the prose of everyday life.

See this husband and wife seated before the fireplace watching the play of the flames.

"What are you thinking about?" queries the wife.

"And you?"

"The same thing you're thinking of."

Idyllic, some will say. And why not, just as truly, an exact description?

Then there is the example of another couple so completely in accord at all times that the husband one day playfully petitioned his wife, "Contradict me sometimes, so that we can be two."

These two fulfilled to the very letter the statement of the Bible, "They shall be two in one flesh." They were one, not only in their flesh, but one in a communion of thought and opinion. They had become so thoroughly one that they forgot to be two.

This could be an evil if it meant the weakening of one of the two personalities to the point of absorption by the other. Some women when first married are in such adoration before their husbands or the

husbands are so infatuated with their wives that unity is effected, but it is a unity through suppression and narrowness. God grant, however, that such a unanimity never be replaced by the less happy state wherein each one clings tenaciously to self-assertion. What should be sought is unity through mutual enrichment in mutual understanding.

In some marriages this unity becomes so complete that not even death can break it. Such, for example, was the union between Queen Astrid and King Leopold III, or between Mireille Dupouey and her husband, a naval officer killed in 1915. During the seventeen years Mireille Dupouey lived after her husband's death, she continued to write letters to him as if he were still living, and to set a place at table between herself and her son for her dear departed who was forever present to her, forever one with her.

In contrast to these families where union is complete, how many there are in which dispute rages permanently; or, if not dispute, at least misunderstanding, constant bitterness.

It has been said and truly said that it is not easy for a man and woman, two poor human beings, finite, limited, and possessed of individual faults, to spend cloudless days together. "A woman must take much upon herself, to live with a man, whoever he may be," writes a moralist. "A man must take much upon himself to live with a woman even though she be most loving. How many perplexities between them, how many veiled enmities even in their most evident caresses! How many half-consented-to abdications on both sides!"

But live together they must. How can they achieve as perfect a harmony as possible? Day after day they must seek it, study, meditate, resolve and act!

THE FOUR BONDS OF CONJUGAL UNION

THE four bonds of conjugal union are the bond of consciences, the bond of intellects, the bond of souls, and the bond of hearts.

THE BOND OF CONSCIENCES: This means that husband and wife must have the same norms for judging between right and wrong. Is it not only too clear that if they do not have an identical point of view in their appreciation of God's law, a fundamental disunity will be introduced into the very foundation of their unity? If one, for example, holds to the principle of free love while the other advocates the principle of unity in marriage, can there be complete communion? Or if one is determined to abide by the demands of the moral law in the difficult duty of procreation while the other has no intention of abstaining from the latest practices of birth control or from onanism, will there not be constant struggle in their home, and that in regard to their most intimate relations? If both are not in agreement on the question of their children's education, one will insist on secular education, the other on Catholic education, and again conflict will ensue.

THE BOND OF INTELLECT: This bond is not so essential as the first--it is in the realm not of strict requirement, but of the desirable. There is much to be gained from shared reading experiences, from a mutual exchange of artistic impressions and psychological observations.

For this, it is not necessary that the wife share her husband's work. It is enough if she is able to be interested in his profession. Nor is it necessary that they have the same tastes, the same outlook; a certain diversity in mentality, on the contrary, is desirable on condition that there are possibilities for mutual exchange of ideas which will lead to mutual enrichment.

That evidently supposes great simplicity in both husband and wife, a loving liberty in their communication of ideas, a very humble recognition of any superior quality in each other, an entire good faith which makes each one willing to yield to the ideas of the other when they are better.

THE BOND OF SOULS: It is not sufficient to enjoy an exchange of ideas in profane matters only. It is very desirable that there be harmony of action in the domain of the spiritual, the supernatural . . . prayer together . . . meditation in common . . . reception of Holy Communion together.

Father Doncoeur and several others go so far as to advise making the examination of conscience together with mutual admonition and mutual resolves. This would surely call for extreme delicacy and could not be so generally recommended as the suggestions given previously. But how beautiful it is when husband and wife are as an open book to each other!

Is it good to tell each other the graces received from God, the aspirations of the soul to become holy, to become a saint? Yes, certainly, on condition that all be done with simplicity, with mutual spontaneity, with nothing of constraint, exaggeration or artificiality. Why should one hide perpetually from one's life companion the best of oneself? Some individuals remain much too reticent and it is a hindrance to great depths of intimacy.

THE BOND OF HEARTS: How many in marriage love each other selfishly, show themselves demanding, moody, eager to receive, but never generous in giving. There is so much selfishness in certain families even when they are very closely united.

The remedy is to supernaturalize the affections; to pass as quickly as possible from passionate love to virtuous love and to make conjugal love a permanent exercise of the theological virtue of charity.

LIFE TOGETHER IS DIFFICULT

MARRIAGE is not an easy vocation. It requires great virtue of husbands and wives.

Personal experience reveals how true that is; those who cannot claim this personal experience can, in any case, accept the statement of psychologists who observe, "Marriage is the most difficult of all human relations, because it is the most intimate and the most constant. To live so close to another person—who in spite of everything remains another person—to be thus drawn together, to associate so intimately with another personality without a wound or without any shock to one's feelings is a difficult thing."

According to an old saying, "There are two moments in life when a man discovers that his wife is his dearest possession in the world—when he carries her across the threshold of his home and when he accompanies her body to the cemetery."

But in the interval between these two moments, they must live together, dwell together, and persevere together.

"To die for the woman one loves is easier than to live with her" claim those who ought to know. And how many women could claim similarly, "To die for the man one loves is easier than to live with him."

They must bear with each other.

A French journalist while visiting Canada stopped for a time at Quebec.

"You have no law permitting a divorce in the case of husbands and wives who do not understand each other?" he questioned.

"No."

"But what do those married persons do whose discontent is continual and whose characters are in no way compatible?"

"They endure each other."

How expressive an answer! How rich in meaning! How expressive of virtue that is perhaps heroic! They endure each other.

This is not an attempt to deny the delights of married life, but to show that more than a little generosity is required to bear its difficulties.

In *"The New Jerusalem"* by Chesterton, a young girl is sought in marriage. She opposes the proposal in view of differences in temperament between herself and the young man. The marriage would certainly be a risk; it would be imprudent.

Michel, the suitor, retorted to this objection in his own style.

"Imprudent! Do you mean to tell me that there are any prudent marriages? You might just as well speak of prudent suicides . . . A young girl never knows her husband before marrying him. Unhappy? Of course, you will be unhappy. Who are you anyway to escape being unhappy, just as well as the mother who brought you into the world! Deceived? Of course you shall be deceived!"

Who proves too much, proves very little. We can, however, through the exaggeration find the strain of truth. "Michel" is a little too pessimistic. He makes a good counterpart to those who enter into marriage as if in a dream.

"Marriage," wisely wrote Paul Claudel—and he gives the true idea—"is not pleasure; it is the sacrifice of pleasure; it is the study of two souls who throughout their future, for an end outside of themselves, shall have to be satisfied with each other always."

LOVING EACH OTHER IN GOD

WE HAVE already seen that it is essential to advance as quickly as possible from a purely natural love to a supernatural love, from a passionate love to a virtuous love.

That is clear. No matter how perfect the partners in marriage may be, each has limitations; we can foresee immediately that at the point where the limitations of the one contact the limitations of the other, sparks will easily fly; misunderstandings, oppositions, and disagreements will arise.

No matter how much effort one puts forth to manifest only virtues, one does not have only virtues. And when one lives in constant contact with another, his faults appear quickly; "No man is great to his valet," says the proverb. Sometimes it is the very virtue of an individual which seems to annoy another. One would have liked more discretion; one is, as it were, eclipsed. Two find their self-love irritated, in conflict.

Or perhaps virtues no longer appear as virtues by reason of being so constantly manifested. Others

become accustomed to seeing them and look upon them as merely natural traits. "There is nothing more than that missing for him or her to be different." It is like the sun or the light; people no longer notice them. Bread by reason of its being daily bread loses its character of "good bread."

Daily intercourse which was a joy in the beginning no longer seems such a special delight; it becomes monotonous. Husband and wife remain together by habit, common interests, honor, even a certain attachment of will, but do they continue to be bound together by love in the deepest sense of the word?

If things go on in this way, they will soon cease to be much concerned about each other; they may preserve a mutual dry esteem which habit will render still drier. Where formerly there existed a mutual ardor, nothing more remains than proper form; where formerly there was never anything more than a delicate remonstrance, there now exists depressing wrangling or a still more depressing coldness.

Married persons must come to the help of weak human nature and try to understand what supernatural love is in order to infuse it into their lives as soon as possible.

Is not the doctrine of the Church on marriage too often forgotten? How many ever reread the epistle of the Nuptial Mass? Meditate on it? In any case, how many husbands and wives read it together? Meditate on it together? That would forearm them against the invasion of worrisome misunderstandings. Why not have recourse to the well-springs of wisdom?

There are not only the epistles. There is the whole gospel.

The example of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth is enlightening. What obedience and cordial simplicity in Mary! What deference and exquisite charity in Saint Joseph! And between the two, what openness of heart, what elevated dealings! Jesus was the bond between Mary, the Mother, and Joseph, the foster-father.

In Christian marriage, Jesus is still the unbreakable bond— prayer together, Holy Mass, and Holy Communion together.

Not only should there be prayer with each other, beside each other, but prayer for each other.

SUPERNATURAL LOVE

SOME persons imagine that the endeavor to transform their natural love into supernatural love will make them awkward, make them lose their spontaneity, their naturalness.

Indeed, nothing is farther from the truth, if supernatural love is rightly understood.

What does it really require?

First of all, does it not require us to fulfill the perfections of natural love? Supernatural love, far from suppressing natural love, makes it more tender, more attentive, more generous; it intensifies the sentiments of affection, esteem, admiration, gratitude, respect, and devotion which constitute the essence of true love.

Supernatural love takes away one thing only from natural and spontaneous love—selfishness, the arch-enemy of love. It demands that everything, from the greatest obligation to the simplest, be done as perfectly as possible. Then by elevating simple human love to the level of true charity, it ennobles the greatest powers of that love. It suppresses nothing. It enriches everything. Better still, it provides in

advance against the danger of a diminution in human love. It pardons weaknesses, deficiencies, faults. Not that it is blind to them, but it does not become agitated by them. It bears with them, handles them tactfully, helps to overcome them. It is capable of bestowing love where all is not lovable. Penetrating beyond the exterior, it can peer into the soul and see the image of God behind a silhouette which has become less pleasing.

That is the whole secret. Supernatural love in us seeks to love in the manner and according to the desire of God; it requires us therefore to love God in those we love and then to love the good qualities He has given them and bear with the absence of those He has not given or with the characteristics He has permitted them to acquire.

Loving without any advertence to self, supernatural love is patient and constant in spite of the faults of those it loves. The Little Sister of the Poor loves her old folk despite their coughing, their unpleasant mannerisms, their varying moods. The Missionaries who care for the lepers love them in spite of their loathsome sores.

Unselfish as it is, supernatural love inspires the one who is animated by it to seek the temporal and above all the spiritual good of the one he loves before his own. Delicately it calls the attention of the loved one to his faults, not to reproach him, but to help him correct them. It does not give in to irritability or moodiness; it is quick humbly to beg pardon and to make reparation, should it ever fail. And when there has been a little outburst, how comforting it is, in the intimate converse of the evening, to acknowledge one's failings, to express sorrow, and to promise to do better in the future with the other's help!

But all this presupposes prayer and a true desire for union with God.

UNITED STRIVING FOR SANCTITY

A BEAUTIFUL work which husband and wife can pursue together is the mutual effort to correct their faults. Maurice Retour, an industrialist and one of the youngest captains of World War I of which he was a victim, suggested this to the woman he loved even during their engagement. He wrote to her, "I must confess something to you . . . I became aware of your imperfections and I thought how pained I should have been if I had not been able to see clearly into your soul . . . You see how frank I want to be with you. We are just engaged and yet instead of paying you compliments, I do not fear to speak to you of your imperfections which my love for you cannot hide . . . Tell me you will pardon me."

Another time he wrote, "In general, engaged persons strive to shine in each other's eyes. We, on the contrary, began by showing each other all our faults...You have acknowledged all your faults to me; I confessed to you all my weakness . . . Thank you for your great confidence in me. But never forget that if I permit myself to give you advice which seems good to me, I can always be mistaken and you ought to discuss it with me. Otherwise I shall never dare to give you my opinions."

In a later letter he said to her, "I have already abused the liberty you gave me. I have told you frankly all I thought about you, nor was I afraid to recognize before you what you call your great faults. It was, I must confess, most difficult for me to tell you because I love you so much that I dread causing you the least pain." He added, "The interior life is what we need to correct our failings and we shall work from now on, if you wish, to grow in it."

This mutual effort of husband and wife to correct themselves of their faults may be much, but it is not

enough. Something more beautiful remains—to strive positively for sanctity through mutual instruction, loving encouragement and a united and confiding zeal for each other's perfection.

"Why should we not live a saintly life?" asked Maurice Retour of his bride-to-be. And they decided upon some very definite principles for themselves.

"Let us put no faith in fortune, in pleasures, even in our self-love which always increases and makes us run the risk of becoming blind.... The one who receives the most grace will make the other profit by it. What do we care what the world says! It will say what it pleases, but it never will be able to say that we are not true Catholics . . . Our life will be holy and simple."

"As far as jewels are concerned," commented Maurice, "I understand you perfectly. If you had loved them, I should never have opposed your tastes, but I tell you frankly, I should have suffered. We shall not fail by excesses on this score. We can do so much good with money that it would be wrong, in spite of my desire to spoil you, to spend it only on you. We shall save all we can to enable us to give more to charity. We shall always go straight to our goal and make no concessions to worldliness."

There is however, nothing admirable in a gloomy life.

"Our interior life must be so intense that it remains alive in all our exterior actions, our pleasures, our work, our joys, and our sorrows. I do not mean an interior life that makes us withdraw into ourselves and become bores for other people. On the contrary, we ought to spread our gaiety generously about us and spend all the activity of our youth to attract those who meet us. But, to be saints, we must be able to conserve in the midst of the most captivating pleasures and the most intense activity an interior calm which enables us to remain self-possessed always. . ."

A saint who is sad is sadly in need of sanctity! A truly inspiring program!

IDEALS FOR MARRIAGE

ON ONE occasion when Maurice Retour was talking with some comrades about his ideals of marriage, he saw some of them smile skeptically. He who had written, "Love has always been sacred to me. In its name I desired to remain faithful to my fiancée even before knowing her," was to discover that all his companions did not share his noble sentiments, his desire for a chaste marriage.

That did not cause him to lower his standards. He simply tried to lead his companions to a more Christian understanding of married life and if he could not do that, he at least showed his displeasure and withdrew from the discussion.

Writing to his future wife, he said, "I have heard some comments about our future, each one more offensive than the other. But I pity these unfortunate individuals who have never known how to love truly, who have never experienced real intimacy with their wife, and who have sought nothing more than appearance or the satisfaction of their caprice. They can say what they wish, they can tell me that I am young or even a little simple but I shall never change my idea. They can never destroy my confidence—first of all, my confidence in you because of God who has certainly protected me in order to find you . . . secondly, my confidence in myself, because I know that I am different from certain individuals about me and I am not ashamed to say so even if it does sound like pride on my part."

If that is pride, it is permissible pride! Rather is it an expression of perfect mastery! It is the magnificent

dignity of the Christian who knows, of course, that he is weak but who refuses to justify in advance his failings and cowardices, and who counts not upon himself but upon God for strength to persevere.

"Pay no attention to those who tell you I shall change," he wrote. "Do not listen to those who say that men who marry young will become unfaithful later. No, I do not want anyone to believe such a monstrous thing of me."

Who was to give him the strength to resist temptations which were always possible?

"The sacrament of our marriage will impart to us the graces necessary to keep our good resolutions. How few understand this sacrament! How few prepare themselves for it and expect to receive from it the graces it can give to those who seek them worthily."

Noble and irresistible pleading! It recalls the words of Lacordaire, "When a person has not taken the trouble to overcome his passions and when the revelation of chaste joys has not come to him, he consoles himself with vices, declaring them necessary, and clothes in the mantle of pseudo-science the testimony of a corrupted heart."

Surely marriage is a sacrament, but it is not a miracle. He who has prepared for it only by youthful escapades will possibly fail to remain steadfast. But can not he who has prepared himself by the chastity of celibacy for the chastity of marriage be trusted to preserve with the help of God, a chaste marriage?

ONE HEART, ONE SOUL

How happy are married persons who can say as Maurice Retour to his wife, "We love each other for our ideas. We see only God and we have become united in order to serve Him better." Such is Christian love.

"We shall ask Christ, who sanctified marriage, to give us all the graces necessary for us. We pray with force but also with joy because we have great confidence in the future since both of us expect our happiness from God alone."

And after Holy Communion which they both received on their wedding day they begged God "to make their mutual love always effect their personal sanctification, to bless their home by sending them many children, to keep in His grace themselves, their little ones and all who would ever live under their roof."

Sometimes we hear it said that there are no examples of married persons living effectively the holy law of marriage as God prescribed it and Christ ratified it.

There are many. More than one might think. And, thanks be to God, there have been some in all ages.

In the time of the early Church, Tertullian, believing his death to be approaching, wrote two books entitled Ad Uxorem*, "To My Wife."* In the last chapter of the second book he gives an unforgettable picture of marriage. One cannot meditate on it too often.

He extols the happiness of marriage "which the Church approves, the Holy Sacrifice confirms, the Blessing seals, the Angels witness, and God ratifies. What an alliance is that of two faithful souls united in a single hope, under a single discipline, under a similar dependence. Both are servants of the same Master. There is no distinction of mind or of body. Both are in truth one flesh; where there is but one body, there is but one mind. They kneel in prayer together, they teach each other, support each other.

They are together in church, together at the Banquet of God, together in trials, in joy. They are incapable of hiding anything from each other, of deserting each other, of annoying each other. In complete liberty, they visit the sick and help the poor. Without anxiety about each other they give alms freely, assist at Holy Mass and without any embarrassment manifest their fervor daily. They do not know what it means to make a furtive sign of the Cross, to mumble trembling greetings, to invoke silent blessings. They sing hymns and psalms vying with each other to give God the most praise. Christ rejoices to see and hear them and gives them His peace. Wherever they are, Christ is with them.

"That is marriage as the Apostle speaks of it to us . . . The faithful cannot be otherwise in their marriage."

Oh, that we might fulfill this ideal in our marriage

We must pray for it and really want it.

MARRIAGE AND THE BIBLE (1)

The Law of Union. How marvelous is the description of the creation of man and woman which the book of Genesis gives us.

God has created the universe. He has hurled worlds into space. Among all these worlds is the earth and on it are all the splendors of the mineral world, the plant world, and the animal world. Each time God sent forth some new creature from His creative Hands, He paused and said, "It is good!" God saw that it was good.

Yes, all of that creation is but a framework, a pedestal. Whom does He intend to place within that framework, upon that pedestal? Man.

Look at Adam. He has intelligence, free will, and a heart.

A heart—the power to love. But to whom will man direct that power of love which God has placed in him?

God placed all of creation "beneath his feet." But what does it mean for man to have everything beneath his feet if he has no one to clasp to his heart? God understood man. That is why the Most High is not satisfied upon the completion of His masterpiece. He does not say as He did after each preceding creation, "It is good," but He says, "It is not good for man to be alone."

Therefore, the Most High, the divine Sculptor, chisel in hand approaches His masterpiece to attack the marble anew; he lays open its side and from the avenues to the heart removes a part; this part of Adam, He forms into woman. A magnificent indication of how close must be the union between husband and wife! A union of wonderful strength, engendered by love and for love! Saint Thomas explains that "God took the substance with which He formed woman close to the heart of man. He did not take it from the head for she is not made to dominate. Neither did he take it from man's feet, for she is not made for servitude. He took it near the heart because she is made to love and to be loved."

Such is the marvel of the union of love in marriage according to God. Love will make of two beings a single one.

Adam acclaimed it upon awaking: "This now is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." That is why the sacred text adds: "Wherefore a man

shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be two in one flesh."

This virginal page does not yet speak of the mother but only of the spouse. God gives Man a companion—not several but one—and this society is called conjugal society. This society will be composed of two persons, a couple, only two. So true is this that until this first woman became a mother she had no name of her own. There was only one name for both.

How wonderful is the inviolable oneness of the human couple according to the desire of God!

MARRIAGE AND THE BIBLE (2)

The Law of Procreation. God did not create love and marriage only for the mutual pleasure of husband and wife. The purpose of their union goes beyond union. From the married couple's intimate union a third person will issue, and if the marriage is fruitful a series of thirds, a progeny which will be the glory of the parents.

Increase and Multiply. God could have multiplied the living without using his creatures as instruments. Adam and Eve were directly created. God needed no one. So true is this, that in the creation of the soul the Most High uses no intermediary. He reserves to Himself the power to infuse the soul into the child whose body the parents cooperate in producing.

As far as the body is concerned God permits and even desires that there should be an intermediary cause, and that constitutes a great marvel. God imparts to His creatures a share in His creative power. The parents are united in the physical expression of their conjugal love and from this bodily union, provided nothing bars the way, life will be born. For the soul there is to be no human agent. For the body a human agent shall exist. It is through the instrumentality of the parents that the body of the child will be born. But God reserves to Himself the power to put the soul into that body by a direct act of creation.

That is the basis for the sovereign beauty of fatherhood and motherhood . . . At the birth of her first born son, Eve, transported with joy, exclaimed, "I have gotten a man through God."

There is a double law in marriage—the law of chastity and the law of fecundity. The law of chastity permits the husband and wife to regulate according to their desire the frequency of intercourse. Should they by mutual consent decide to live for a time as brother and sister, say during Lent or Advent, or at some other times in their life together, for any just and noble reasons, they may do so provided they run no risk of sin.

The principal application of the law of chastity for the married is this: If they decide either by explicit or implicit agreement to perform the marriage act, they may do nothing to prevent conception.

Let them petition God for the desired grace to practice the restraints and continence they recognize as helpful or if it is not advisable for them to abstain from physical union, the grace to do nothing counter to duty.

CONJUGAL DUTY

THE demands of married life emanate above all from the Natural Law; in other words, right reason left to itself would reveal them to conscience. Even if Christ had never come, if Revelation had never been

given, these requirements would be what they are. The Church, keeping to the doctrine of Christ merely upholds them with her supreme authority; she does not institute them. She reaffirms the law, explains its application, clarifies the ideal every time someone attempts to obscure it.

To that end we have various encyclicals of the popes as *"Maximum Illud"* by Leo XIII and *"Casti Connubii"* by Pius XI and also pastoral letters issued periodically by bishops as the need arises.

One of the most complete of such letters on conjugal duty is the one written by Cardinal Mercier. Reminding the people of his diocese of the true doctrine on marriage, he explains the Christian concept of the conjugal life:

"The original and primary reason for the union of man and woman is the foundation of a family, the beginning of children whom they will have the honor and the obligation to rear in the Faith and in Christian principles.

"It appears, therefore, that the first effect of marriage is a duty that the married may not avoid . . . "How far from truth are those who present marriage as a union whose sole purpose is physical love.

"The attraction to conjugal intercourse is legitimate, beyond a doubt. But such satisfaction of the sexual appetite is justifiable only in the function for which it was destined and which it was meant to ensure.

"How grave then is the sin of those who circumvent the divine law in this matter. A mortal sin is committed every time that the conception of a child is prevented by a deliberate positive act."

Deliberately, before, during or after intercourse to take precautions destined to prevent conception constitutes a formal and seriously unlawful act.

The insidious propaganda on birth control that is being spread about through pamphlets, lectures, and advertisements is nothing but an effort to make an attack on life a lawful act. Cardinal Mercier condemns doctors, pharmacists, or mid-wives who betray their social mission.

It is forbidden to attack life, even in the generative act itself, that is to say, at the very point of origin. And those who dare to kill the living one being formed in the womb of its mother, are punished by the Church with censure reserved to the bishop. That means that the priest who absolves them must obtain from the bishop special authorization to do so, although he need not mention their names.

How the thought of all the souls sacrificed through marriage frauds ought to incite me to pray for holiness of family life and general observance of conjugal duty. War is not the scourge which kills the most people. It is lust.

MOTHERHOOD

THE writer who said, "Man conquers and woman gives herself," was correct. Such indeed is the difference between man and woman in their attitude to life. His is an active heroism; hers a passive heroism. For the grown man, life is but a series of conquests; he goes from one victory to the other, carried along by the zest of it until he fails. Woman makes a gift of herself to life; she spends herself to the point of exhaustion for her husband, for her children, for those who suffer, for the unfortunate. But this gift of hers in its fullest significance is childbirth, a supreme act of passive heroism. Giving birth to a child is not a purely physical achievement. A mind, a soul come to life and uniting with the fetus form, without the mother's awareness, a man—a miracle indeed.

What is the most wonderful is the blossoming and growth of maternal love in the woman from the very moment of her child's conception, through its birth, and throughout its whole life, but particularly during its baby days.

In a certain sense, every woman from her earliest years has the makings of a mother in her. As a little girl she plays with her doll, and the game holds her interest only because her imagination transforms the rag doll or china doll she clasps in her already expert arms into a living child. So true is this, that even virginal souls who consecrate themselves to the service of the neighbor may be called mother; that they really are for their poor, their orphans, their sick . . .

But it is quite evident that at the time of actual maternity, of physical maternity, a special creation is effected in the woman. At the same time that milk mounts to her breast, maternal love takes possession of her soul, a love of a very special quality which does not precede but which follows childbirth. Before the child appears, there can be expectation, yearning, vague tenderness like the dawn preceding day; it is not yet maternal love in the strongest and strictest sense of the word.

The child is born. The woman, even though she had been extremely lazy, manifests an astonishing energy for all that concerns her baby. Though she had been previously most shiftless now she becomes ingenious, attentive, watchful and almost anxious. No one need tell her that her tiny babe can do nothing for itself and that it is exposed to danger of death at almost every instant. She anticipates its needs, its desires and a frown appears at the least cloud that passes over the cradle. No trouble daunts her. As a young girl and young woman she grumbled over sacrifice and became irritable; now she is eager in sacrifice—hours of watching, getting up at night; if not able to nurse the child, she makes minute preparation of formulas, and even later, pays careful attention to the kinds of food the baby may have. It all seems to come to her naturally; it seems to be second-nature. But even if she has acquired her knowledge through training and study in special courses which she may have taken with no particular relish, now she carries it out with special zest and warmth of feeling.

If her baby is well formed, beautiful, healthy and lively, she rejoices. But if, unfortunately, it is deformed, weak, listless, her love increases. It is as if she wishes to shower him with love to make up to the little one for all he lacks as if by clasping it more tenderly to herself she can supplement its life.

Should her child later become a prodigal, she will have for him an astonishing partiality; if she believes him to be a hero, it is her prejudice in his favor! Marvelous contradiction in which maternal love reveals itself!

How eagerly she desires the father's love for the child. Then again she is afraid that the father will not be sufficiently firm and will give in to him too easily. Now the warmest caresses, now the height of disinterestedness born of maternal love!

IS BIRTH CONTROL PERMISSIBLE?

To LIMIT procreation by the practice of contraceptive devices without foregoing sexual union is forbidden. No one has the right to suppress life. To do away with a living adult is homicide; to do away with the living child in the course of its development within the womb of its mother is the crime of abortion; to destroy the seed of life, in the very generative act itself so as to prevent possible conception is Onanism, so called after Onan in the Old Testament who indulged in this practice.

No one has the right to place any act which by its nature is productive of life, and on his own authority,

frustrate the effects of that act which is the generation of a life. Nature must be allowed to take its course. However, if for some reason decreed by Providence, conception does not take place, that is God's act. The individual has not on his own decision killed or sought to kill human life.

It has already been said that to limit procreation by abstaining from intercourse is within the right of the husband and wife.

There is however another method of birth control which has been much discussed and about which it is essential to have clear ideas. May the married couple profit by the wife's cycles of infertility, as suggested by the Rhythm theory, limiting their sexual union to such periods as seem less likely to result in conception? The answer to that question ought to be qualified.

To adopt this practice temporarily in order to space births somewhat without having to deprive themselves of each other is certainly different from making the practice habitual in order definitely to avoid having any children or to avoid it at least for a long time.

Certainly graver reasons are needed to justify the second instance than to justify the first. Are the reasons for it purely selfish? Then the married partners are at fault. They do not by their conduct violate the law of chastity in marriage, that is true, but they do violate the law of charity, or to put it more graphically, the law of fruitfulness.

The plan of God for married persons in this matter of fecundity is not that they have the largest number of children possible. Rather it is that they should have the largest number that they are capable of rearing well considering the position in which Providence has placed them or in other words taking into account the health, the economic status of the family, and other such considerations. It is a problem of honesty.

It is up to each individual to face himself squarely on this problem, if it is his, and examine himself sincerely on the complete honesty of his manner of acting. Then such a one will be ready to meditate often upon the reasons that argue for peopling the cradles.

WHY HAVE A LARGE FAMILY

WE HAVE seen that the practice of Rhythm, above all if it is only temporary, is legitimate and reasonable. But, even in that case, particularly when it concerns those just starting out on their marital life, it is advisable to call attention to some vital considerations to be taken into account:

- The harm it can do by separating the idea of sexual pleasure from the idea of fatherhood and motherhood.
- The harm it can do by overemphasizing the carnal side of life together at the expense of the tender and spiritual aspect.
- The harm it can do by causing inordinate abandonment to the senses during the infertile periods.

Rather than seeking out the means—even legitimate means—of limiting the offspring, what is really important for the married couple is to discover the reasons for having many children.

There are reasons of charity:

- Toward children who depend upon the parents to be called or not called to life—to eternity.
- Toward Christian society to which they should seek to give as many baptized souls as possible and,

if God permits, priests and religious for a world that needs them so much.

- Toward their country for whom they may rear citizens who will bring her life and prosperity.

How beautiful are such reasons!

Consider these young chosen ones in perspective. It depends on me—on us—with just a little generosity on our part, to dare to bring them forth from nothingness, to call them into being, to life.

That will mean greater glory for God; it will mean for them an eternity of happiness. It is up to me—to us—to open for them the book of life, the Book of Life; for a life in its fuller sense is not merely a period of time, it is part of a life which will never end. In bringing forth children, parents are fashioning citizens of eternity.

It is not enough to consider the Church triumphant and how to help the greatest possible number to enter into it; we can and we ought to consider the Church militant. Are the number of baptized souls bent on living their baptism sufficient in number? Where can they better increase, develop and aid in the Christian renewal, that is, the baptismal renewal of the world than in Christian families? Are there enough priests? . . . War has mowed down a great number of them. Even before the war there were not enough for the work to be done. Now, the need is tragic. Bishops can only ordain . . . The priesthood depends mainly on marital holiness. If parents do their duty, if they are generous, there will be priests; otherwise, the Church will weaken.

As for our country, its beauty is proportionate to its men, to its men of valor. The recent wars showed the tragedy of a lack of manpower. These are of course temporal reasons, but spiritual interests are closely linked with them.

Reflect on all this . . . Let life live!

THE BELL OF LIFE

IN 1935 there was a project on foot to install a bell of life and a dial of death in the heart of the city of Berlin. The plan may have fallen through. A large bell was to boom out every five minutes; in the interval a smaller bell was to ring nine times announcing to the neighborhood that nine children were being born in Germany during that time. Then an hour glass was to indicate to the passersby that in the space of five minutes, seven Germans had gone to their graves.

Whether realized or not, the project was worthwhile. To announce the increase of life is helpful; to call to mind the work of death more helpful still, but not the least important is to point out the triumph of life over death.

Today’s meditation is to dwell on this last thought. It is not so important now to contemplate the end of life and the responsibility to be faced at that dread moment as to welcome the new cradles of life and to determine whether I am increasing for my country as I should the chiming of the life-bell.

In November 1939, a leader of a heavy artillery division at the Maginot line wrote in a letter: “I have eighteen men in my sector. They are between thirty and thirty-five years old; all except a few are married; all of them together have only eight children!”

If, as good Political Economy points out the average number of children per family for a country that does not want to die out is three—two to replace the father and mother and a third destined to fill the void caused by infant mortality—then those eighteen men should have had at least fifty-four children among them. They had eight. The deficit then was forty-six.

There is of course no moral law that requires the married to have three children. The example given here is simply a social or national aspect of the problem. It has already been pointed out that the moral law is determined not by the country to which one belongs—although there might be a duty to give it a thought—but by the law of chastity in marriage on the one hand and the law of fecundity on the other.

It might be well here to come back to these points. The law of fecundity expects the parents to have as many children as they are capable of rearing in a human and Christian manner. As for birth control, the law of chastity sets the rule saying that nothing may be done artificially to frustrate conception.

But to return to the social viewpoint—my country's future and society's need. Of what good is it to cry out long live my country if my only contribution is to her death?

More cradles than tombs! That should be our motto. How great is the disaster when the contrary is true! Does not such an argument which possibly has no force with weaklings or those too wrapped up in themselves bear weight with me? It is not the most decisive argument to encourage large families, but it is not a negligible argument.

Patriotic duty does not belong to morality in war time only. It exists and binds conscience in peace as well. In another way perhaps but just as imperatively.

Do I love my country? Do I love her enough to be willing to give her children? Certainly not primarily for the time of war, but for peace-time equally. The more valiant hearts and arms there are, the more prosperous is the country. The true wealth of a people is their wealth in men.

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF HAVING CHILDREN?

WE HAVE seen clearly that it is a "serious matter" to prevent conception by any voluntary positive act and if full knowledge and complete consent of the will are present it constitutes a mortal sin. If the marital act is performed, then God may not in any way—by the opposition of the parents—be hindered from creating a soul.

But we cannot, considering our burdens, increase the number of our children!

That may be, responds the Moral Law; such a case is far from being imaginary. But you do not enter upon marriage only for enjoyment. In the plan of Divine Providence, pleasure is the accomplishment or the result of duty fulfilled. To separate the pleasure from the duty, to seek the first while evading the second is to go counter to the divine plan. Sexual pleasure presupposes the normal exercise of the generative function, the acceptance of the resultant burdens for which it is, as Cardinal Mercier expresses it, "the providential payment."

But when you consider the intimacy of life together, how can we refrain for any length of time at all without giving ourselves to each other?

There is every reason to believe that, without prayer and recourse to the sacraments, you are right. But what is your supernatural program? What are you doing to rise above the senses, to moderate the flesh?

Can’t we choose those times when fertility is least probable? Yes, if you have a sufficient reason, as you seem to have.

And the necessity of having to practice prudent and courageous continence several days each month will in itself force you to a certain and meritorious generosity.

Even that is not possible for us; for then we would have to renounce marital intimacies.

Of course. But nowhere has it been said that marriage is a state where one can allow himself every liberty suggested by his caprice without exercising any judgment.

That is said nowhere; at least, not in any sane and honest books on morality. Married persons are too quick to think that, because they have not chosen “the state of perfection” in absolute virginity, the great virtues are not for them.

Even in granting themselves what they may legitimately permit themselves, the husband and wife have a large field for detachment. They ought to be willing to profit by the opportunity and not reject it on the plea of moral or physiological impossibility when it is really because of their lack of stamina, of Christian spirit, and the will to self- control.

How will such married persons (aenemic in their spiritual life and accustomed to denying themselves nothing, even when the cost is not too great) deny themselves when a serious law binds them?

One must learn to will in order to know how to will. And if one falls he must not excuse but accuse himself.

You are the Judge of my past, O my God. I offer You all its efforts and its weaknesses. Give me the grace to be generous in the future.

THE ONLY CHILD

THERE is, as we have seen, a double duty involved in the marital bond:

- The duty of chastity: In no way to attack the law of life.
- The duty of charity or fruitfulness: To do one’s best for the production of life.

It is impossible—and that is self-evident—to set a definite figure as the gauge of duty in procreation. A very competent authority on this subject, Father P. Boisgelat, S. J., has this to say:

“Who keeps below his minimum possibilities fails in the duty of his state of life and sins through selfishness. Who strives for his possibilities and realizes them does his duty. Who exceeds the maximum of his possibilities sins by imprudence and intemperance.”

As for this level of possibility about which he speaks, it must be determined by each one’s conscience without selfishness and without imprudence.

“One must on his part confide in God, abandoning to Divine Providence the possibility of unforeseen misfortunes, such as the unexpected and early death of the father, a possible lower economic status in the future, war. . .

“Duty obliges us to foresee only what is foreseeable and likely; all the rest must be confided to God.”

There are couples who eagerly desire one child but not several children. They want the one either to have a tangible proof that they have made a fruitful marriage or to create a precious and living bond between them. They desire only the one because they do not want to be encumbered; they do not want to limit the regular tenor of their lives, the quality and variety of their wardrobe, and they are afraid to run the risk to their health that every new birth might bring; they dread the crying and the inconvenience caused by very little children. These reasons and others just as selfish are worth nothing. Serious reasons are necessary to dispense from serious duty.

The idea of limiting the family in order to give to the one (or to the very small number) resources which will eliminate the necessity of working or assure the whole benefit of the entire fortune is not in itself selfish on the part of the parents. It is extremely harmful however. We are not born to avoid work here below. Each one is obliged to contribute his maximum effort to the welfare of society. We are not here to reign, but to wrestle.

Parents do not manifest much esteem for the fruit of their blood if they do not deem it capable of gaining, by its own power, a place in life whenever it so desires.

Then, too, is there not always the danger that the only child will receive too soft a training, that he will be spoilt and be of an inferior character?

Should this only child die young, what anguish for the father and mother! They themselves become the very first victims of their damnable birth control.

CHRIST AND MARRIAGE

OUR LORD did not come to destroy but to fulfill the law. Marriage was to remain exactly what it was in the Natural Law:

the exchange of two wills for the purpose of procreation. Our Savior who knew very well the difficulties of the marital state made a sacrament of this mutual exchange of wills, a rite that imparts grace. Each of the two in becoming united to the other will enrich that other one with an increase of sanctifying grace. Both should be in the state of grace before the marriage takes place since it is a sacrament of the living, which means that its purpose is to intensify the divine life already existing in the soul. By their gift of themselves to each other they also obtain for each other a gift of new growth in the divine.

Because marriage is fundamentally a contract—a double yes giving to each of the two complete right to the other—it has this special feature that there is no other minister than the two concerned. Sometimes people say, “That’s Father So and So; he married us.” The expression is incorrect. It is not the priest who marries the bride and groom; they marry themselves. They themselves are the ministers of the sacrament which they receive at the same time. The priest is there only in the capacity of a witness representing the Church; as the witness required for the validity of the marriage; but a witness only.

What eminent dignity therefore has the sacrament of Matrimony! What eminent dignity have the bride and groom!

They are for each other transmitters of the divine.

The bonds which they contract bear upon two points: the oneness of the couple, the indissolubility of their bonds.

Our Lord, who made of marriage a grace-giving rite, also stressed the double obligation of unity and indissolubility.

Oneness: They form a single unit. They shall be two in one flesh, says Genesis. But due to human grossness, forms of polygamy were introduced. Our Savior forbade them, and the Church has always taken care to require the observance of the law. Love itself demands it. Marriage is such an intimate reality. To live it with several individuals at the same time is condemned by natural feeling itself. Divine law merely reaffirms this basic requirement. Furthermore, family stability as well as the happiness of the children militate equally in favor of oneness.

Indissolubility: Marriage creates a oneness forever; a oneness that can be dissolved only by the death of either partner. The encyclical of Pius XI, *"Casti-Connubii,"* reminds the world of this:

"For each individual marriage, inasmuch as it is a conjugal union of a particular man and woman, arises only from the free consent of each of the spouses; and this free act of the will, by which each party hands over and accepts those rights proper to the state of marriage is so necessary to constitute true marriage that it cannot be supplied by any human power.

"This freedom, however, regards only the point whether the contracting parties really wish to enter upon matrimony or to marry this particular person; but the nature of matrimony is entirely independent of the free will of man, so that if one has once contracted matrimony he is thereby subject to its Divinely made laws and its essential properties."

MARRIAGE AND BAPTISM

CHRIST came to restore to us the divine life lost by original sin. He instituted baptism as the practical means of entering upon the supernatural. The baptized person is not only a soul and a body, but a soul in which God lives.

According to one of the Fathers of the Church baptism is a marriage between God and the soul; he goes so far as to call the soul Spirita Sancta the feminine form for the Holy Spirit (Spiritus Sanctus). Without this marriage of God and the soul, the individual can have no spiritual fecundity. It is impossible: The most noble human act performed by one in mortal sin has no value at all for heaven.

What then is the marriage of two beings of flesh and bone?

It is the image on an earthly plane of a union which is more beautiful although invisible—the union of God and the soul.

Baptism, marriage—two sacraments of union—and the second will always be but a symbol of the first. Union of God with the soul, union of husband and wife. Two sacraments of union; two sacraments of fecundity. Without God, the soul can do nothing fruitful for heaven; without each other, husband and wife cannot beget children. And just as Saint Paul could call all sin adultery since it is deliberate divorce from God, so every break in the marriage bond is blameworthy and true adultery.

Both baptism and marriage then are sacraments of inviolable union. A rupture of the union whether a divorce from God or a divorce from one's partner in marriage can in either case be called adultery.

What better guarantee have the wedded couple of their reciprocal fidelity than their common life in the state of grace! Each of the two refusing to be divorced from God is thus more sure of the other. United

as they are by the same promise, by conjugal embraces, they are likewise united with each other by the same Holy Spirit who forms the Bond between them. Any husband or wife who denies this is already committing an offence against the integrity of the gift of self. Each of the two must live the truth of Tertullian's definition of a soul in grace. "What is a Christian?" he asked. "A Christian is a soul in a body and God in that soul." To give to one's partner in marriage only the first two elements and refuse the third is not to give all, not to give the best. Truly it is a plunder, a plunder which injures husband and wife. Is it possible not to realize this? It remains profoundly true just the same: Indeed, it is a double betrayal. For who can say that one who has been coward enough to betray God will not be just as likely to betray the partner of his life?

So true is this, that only fidelity to God can give completeness to marriage.

RESPECT IN LOVE

COMPLETE fidelity in marriage is essential. It is however only a minimum. To treat each other as living tabernacles of God— that is what marriage between two baptized persons demands.

Know you that the sacrament of Christian initiation transforms a person into a living temple of the Most High? You know.

Well then, behind this more or less attractive human silhouette which is the person of the marriage partner, body and soul, there is God dwelling within and living His Divine life in the depths of the soul. Consequently when poor health or advancing age cause husband or wife to grow less attractive exteriorly, that is not a reason for love to wane.

How many know that when husband and wife in the state of grace embrace each other by conjugal privilege, they clasp the Holy Trinity, who unites them even more closely than their human embrace? Far from coming between them, what supernatural intimacy and what magnificent dignity does it give to their union! How it elevates, and idealizes what in itself is good though still carnal and therefore capable of easily becoming earthy and, for some, difficult to consider as something noble.

It is rare to find Christians who truly have faith at least faith in the fundamental mystery of the life of the baptized.

Father Charles de Foucauld wrote to his married sister, the mother of a family, saying, "God is in us, in the depths of our soul . . . always, always, always there, listening to us and asking us to chat a bit with Him. And that is, as much as my weakness will permit, my very life, my darling. Try, that more and more it may become yours; that will not isolate you, nor draw you away from your other occupations. It only requires a minute; then, instead of being alone, there will be two of you to fulfill your tasks. From time to time lower your eyes toward your heart, recollect yourself for a mere quarter of a minute and say, 'You are there, my God. I love You.' It will take you no more time than that and all that you do will be much better done having such a help. And what help it is! Little by little, you will acquire the habit and you will finally be always aware of this sweet companion within yourself, this God of our hearts... Let us pray for each other that we may both keep this dear Guest of our souls loving company."

If husband and wife were equally convinced of the living splendor their souls actually present, how the marital act, so holy to begin with, would become for them an act of divine faith, an act penetrated by the highest supernatural spirit.

I want to meditate often on my baptism, and the mystery of the divine life in me. I want to become accustomed to treat myself as a living tabernacle of my Lord, to regard the companion of my life as the thrice holy shrine of the Divinity, for I know this to be a reality.

The just live by faith. I want to live by faith.

MARRIAGE AND THE MYSTICAL BODY

CHRIST came to restore the divine life lost to us by sin. But how? He did not save us only by some act external to Himself as one might lay down a sum of money to ransom a slave but by incorporating us in Himself, by making all of us with Him a single organism. "I am the Vine, you are the branches." Christ is the Head, we the members and together we are the whole body, Christ. The aggregate of all the members, all the branches united constitutes the Church joined by an unbreakable bond to Christ, its Leader and Head.

And Christian marriage will be . . . and will only be . . . but the symbol of this union of Christ with His Church, of the Church with its Head Saint. Paul at the end of his Epistle to the Christians at Ephesus gives no other rule of love and of security in their union to the married than the counsel to copy this union in their life.

He says to wives, "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord because the husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the Church being Himself Savior of the body. But just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things."

Then addressing himself to husbands, he continues, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her." This is the way husbands ought to love their wives and recalling the words of Genesis. "They shall be two in one flesh," Saint Paul concludes, "This is a great mystery.... I mean in reference to Christ and to the Church."

Is it possible to imagine a divorce between Christ and the Church, between the Church and Christ? By the same token, it should be impossible to conceive of a divorce between a man and woman in Christian marriage, the man being but a double, an image of Christ; the woman a double, an image of the Church.

This is but a negative aspect . . . not to be disunited. The union of Christ with the Church which baptism symbolizes invites the married to have for each other the most profound and entire consecration to each other. It is this entire consecration to each other which Saint Paul demands.

It is not without reason that the liturgy of the nuptial mass contains this particular epistle of Saint Paul.

Unfortunately how few understand something of the significance of these texts!

How much more fitting would it be, at the time of the marriage, to profit by the marriage discourse to explain to those concerned the sublime meaning of the ceremony and the obligations which will ensue instead of handing out just so much twaddle and bestowing so many compliments!

The whole difficulty is that it would necessitate touching upon the profound Gospel spirit and, for the majority of persons, the Gospel is a dead letter. As a consequence, everyone keeps to the low level of hackneyed themes understandable to all.

I shall come back often to this Epistle of my nuptial Mass; it will help me to deepen my Christianity.

MUTUAL DEVOTEDNESS

THE emphasis upon the duty of reciprocal devotedness of husband and wife is evident in the previous quotation from Saint Paul. So that the Church may remain intact, beautiful, and immaculate, Christ is lavish in His care of her. In return the Church leaves nothing undone to bring glory to her Divine Spouse.

That is how husbands and wives should treat each other. The husband must be another Christ, a faithful copy of Christ. He ought to neglect nothing for the honor and the welfare of his wife; he should even be ready, if the need arose, to shed his blood for her. She, on her part, ought to do everything to revere her husband. It must be a mutual rivalry of love.

Just as there exists between Christ and the Church, in perfect harmony with their mutual devotedness, a bond of authority on the one side and of submission on the other, so too in the home, the husband is entrusted with the lead in their advance together and the wife joins her efforts to his in sentiments of loving submission.

The wife's duty of subordination to her husband does not arise from woman's incapacity but from the different functions each of the two are to exercise. When each fulfills well the proper function, the unity of the home is assured. The wife is not a slave; she is a companion. On essential points there is no subordination but necessary equality.

The man has no right to come to marriage sullied and yet demand that his wife be still a virgin. The man does not have permission to betray the home, and the wife the obligation to remain faithful. And when it is a question of the marriage right, the duty is conjugal, equal for each: When the husband asks the wife to give herself to him she must grant the request. But there is a reciprocal duty. When she makes the same request of him, he too must grant it.

The duty of subordination holds only where the direction of the home is concerned. It does not give the husband the right to impose any of his whims upon his wife. In fact, should he go so far as to make demands contrary to the law of God, she has the duty to resist him with all gentleness but also with the necessary firmness. Rightly understood, then, the wife's submission to her husband is not at all demeaning. Moreover, to obey is never to descend but to ascend.

Let husband and wife strive not so much to equal each other as to be worthy of each other. Let the husband put into the exercise of his authority the reserve and prudence which win confidence and let the wife strive to be an accomplished woman not masculine but feminine.

The interesting character of the home is not a man, a woman, but the couple; not an individual, but the family, the harmonious development of the family cell; not duality as such but the advance in common of the two.

WOMAN'S SUPERIORITY

IN HIS book, *"Il Sangue di Cristo,"* Igino Giordani pronounces this judgment:

"Even when he is good, man always reminds one a little of a heron; he stands on one foot and assumes poses. He turns to the right, then to the left, and what concern he shows for his appearance!

“The Christian woman fulfills the more obscure domestic tasks, services humble and hidden. The woman is to be like Mary. She will become familiar with the tasks that require abnegation. Is it not perhaps easier to ascend the pulpit than to watch at the bedside of the dying? There are plenty of such examples. Saint Augustine wrote stacks of books but who made a confessor of the faith out of this professor? His mother—with her tears.

“More women than men enter religion; yet they do not have the satisfaction of the priesthood. It is perhaps because of these interceding and retiring women that all does not go up in the smoke of vanity’s fireworks.”

Men might perhaps retort that on the score of vanity, women do not yield to them a point. If they, the men, know how to pose to advantage, and women, just to win admiration, also do their share of strutting, and with an earnestness worthy of a better cause. Would they be such slaves to fashion if they did not have—and how much more than men— the mania for excelling their rivals and gaining notice?

Certainly in self sacrifice and above all in the daily humble hidden devotedness which the tasks of the home require, woman is in the lead. That does not mean that man, in his profession, does not know how to sacrifice himself for the one he loves. Would he spend himself as he does if he did not know that a smile would reward him in the evening and a gentle voice would sing his praises? Nevertheless, in general, the opinion of Giordani can be accepted as well as the proofs he gives for it.

We need not consider religious life now. It has no point here. All we need do is look to the Christian home to find without difficulty numerous and sometimes touching examples of devotedness which nothing can exhaust. Here is a wife; she has a husband who gets beside himself with rage; he has real fits of temper, the blood rushes to his head and he is practically on the verge of a stroke. Will the woman let him to his fate and punish him for his violence by depriving him at least for a time of her attentions? Not at all!

Wasn’t it Shakespeare who gave us this delightful scene: A sheriff is enraged against his wife. She leaves the room. Perhaps she has gone off to pout because she is away for a while. But no! Here she comes, her arms loaded down, and sets about preparing mustard packs for her husband’s feet and cold packs for his head to avert the ill effects of his moments of fury.

It might be just an episode in a play but it is none the less symbolic. That is woman for you!

THE BOSS IN THE HOUSE

AFTER a meditation on his duty to rule his future home, Maurice Retour wrote the following ideas to his fiancée. “In all the families I have visited, the husbands want to appear to rule their wives while the wives quietly claim that they rule their husbands. I eagerly desire to have influence on your soul to help you ascend; but I desire just as eagerly to have you exercise a great influence on mine. Let us leave to others such petty behavior and thank God in all humility that He has enlightened us.”

In another letter he came back to the same idea “I wish to be master before the law, I even want to be responsible to God for the morality of our home, but for all the details of our life there is no master. I have never had greater disdain for anyone than I have for a married man who presumes to dominate his wife. I have seen some husbands grow actually stubborn over some detail so that they do not have the appearance before others of giving in to their wives. I think such husbands are idiots.” Then as a reason for his opinion he adds, “Two persons living together necessarily have an influence upon each other, but

I promise you never to try by any subtlety to hold you under my dominion. We shall live side by side without a thought for such notions. I want to believe that we can belong to each other in order to enjoy life but with a love that will bring us ever close to God.... God must always be foremost and He must be our goal even in our love, now and always."

All husbands are not of that caliber. In a novel by a German author, a certain baron gives his idea on how women should be treated.

"They must be made to feel their inferiority otherwise they will be spoiled.

"If you get married, do as I do. Never tell her beforehand about a trip or a horseback ride. Just lead in your horse.

"Where are you going, my dear?‟ she will ask the first or second time. Give no answer, but continue putting on your gloves.

"Are you going to let me alone like this?‟ she will add stroking your cheeks. You seize your riding whip quickly and say, "Yes, I have to go to town. I have this and that to do. Goodbye. And if I'm not back at nine o'clock for supper, don't wait for me." She trembles, but you don't pay any attention. She runs after you, but you signal with your whip for her to go back. She runs to the window, leans out, and waves her handkerchief crying "Adrien!" But let her white banner wave and don't bother. Dig in your spurs and get going! I swear that that's the way to keep women respectful. By the third time, my wife asked no more questions and God be praised, the wailing has come to an end."

A mere comparison of these two different attitudes makes the right one stand out clearly. There are some husbands who are blackguards; others who are gentlemen.

My choice is made.

MARRIAGE AND THE EUCHARIST (1)

A YOUNG lady before her marriage wrote to her future husband asking him to go to Holy Communion with her as often as possible; "The Eucharist is the sacrament of those who are engaged to be married because it is the Sacrament of Love." So impressed was the young man by her thought and so much good did he derive from it, that he engraved the sentence on her tombstone when she was taken from him by an early death.

Marriage and the Eucharist. . . how true that they are both sacraments of love.

What does love require?

Love expresses itself by these three needs: the need of the presence of the beloved, the need of union, the need of exchange of sacrifices. Each of the two sacraments satisfies this triple need.

Need of presence. In the Eucharist: "This is My Body." God present in us in His divine nature by sanctifying grace received at baptism found the means to unite to Himself a human nature: "The Word was made flesh." He was certain that under that new form He would find a way to make Himself present to humanity. Therefore, the Eucharist.

In marriage: Needless to mention the yearning the couple have to be together. If they talk, it will only be to tell each other how glad they are to be near each other. They may say nothing, but then in the deep

silence which envelops them their souls will be knit together, they will commune and exchange the best of themselves. Silence between lovers is often more eloquent than words; the following advice of a Chinese sage to a young girl considering a proposal of marriage evidenced judgment and experience:

“If he tells you, “I love you more than all the world,” turn away your head and nonchalantly fuss with your hair. If he tells you, “I love you more than the golden rod in the temple,” adjust the folds of your dress and reproach him laughingly as if amused at his impiety.

“If he passes beneath your window on a white horse to say goodbye because he prefers to die by a thrust of the sword than to despair, give him a flower and wish him a happy trip.

“But if he remains beside you, numb as a slave before a king and clumsy to the point of spilling tea on your blue tablecloth, then smile at him tenderly as you would for the one whom you wish to accept for always.”

Even though at the beginning of marriage, being together is unalloyed joy and there is no need to urge cohabitation upon the newlyweds, it can happen that in the long run unpleasantnesses arise; the charm of being together wanes perhaps because faults show up more readily than in the past or because the couple’s concept of marriage was overly romantic, not preparing them for the possible flaws in each other or simply because a man will never be anything else but a man and a woman never anything else but a woman, that is, two limited beings who can not avoid discovering their limitations sooner or later.

No one is obliged to marry. But once married, cohabitation is a duty. Canon Law states: “The spouses must observe the community of the conjugal life.” Saint Alphonsus says even more specifically, “The married are bound to cohabitation in one house to the sharing of bed and board.” Separation regarding the last two points can for just reasons, be permitted in certain cases. Grave reasons are necessary to dispense husbands and wives from living under the same roof; there is always the danger of scandal to be feared and, under the stress of temptations which may arise, also the danger of transforming simple separation of bodies into real divorce.

MARRIAGE AND THE EUCHARIST (2)

LOVE, which thrives on the mutual presence of the two who cherish each other and yearn for each other, also seeks physical expression.

It is true for marriage; it is true for the Eucharist.

That physical expression is a need of love, both experience and the most elementary psychology more than amply prove. Doesn’t a mother often say to her baby whom she is smothering with kisses, “I could just eat you up,” as if she vainly dreamed of being able to reincorporate it?

What is impossible to the mother is possible to Our Lord. He wanted to give Himself to us as food not so much that we might incorporate Him in ourselves as that He might incorporate us in Himself. In the case of ordinary food, it is the one who eats who assimilates. In the Eucharist, it is the Living Bread which assimilates us in Itself: “Take and eat, this is My Body; take and drink, this is My Blood. If you do not eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, you shall not have life in you. He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood shall have life everlasting.”

The Eucharist requires that we take it and consume it. The Host is not made for the eyes, to be seen, but

to be eaten. It is not enough to look and to adore; we must receive and assimilate: “Take and eat.” The Real Presence is already a great gift and to be present at Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament a precious exercise which the Church praises. But that is not the whole significance of the Eucharist. The Eucharist demands communion, the common union . . . and what a closely bound community . . . of two beings who love each other, Christ and the Christian.

Because love is the ideal basis for the sacrament of matrimony, marriage in its turn dreams of physical expression.

Since it is concerned with uniting not angelic but human natures, that is, spirits within bodies, marriage, while it involves a union of souls, also normally involves a union of bodies which should facilitate the union of souls. It is the entire being of the one which seeks to become united with the entire being of the other.

It can then readily be understood how in view of the particular intimacy sought through bodily union, delicacy claims privacy. It is a good act without question and willed by God who by His nature can permit not even the shadow of sin. The Church, in the course of her history, condemned those overly severe moralists who wanted to oblige the married to go to confession before receiving Holy Communion if they had previously had intercourse.

There is no question about the couple’s right to all those marks of affection and tenderness which normally accompany the generative act. Still, between Christian husbands and wives, a wise modesty, not in the least fearful, but decently reserved, will be the rule.

The strict right by which sin is measured is one thing; quite different is the domain of perfection or even of imperfection which extends far beyond that and which is properly the course of Christian refinement.

STRANGE PROFANATION

MARRIAGE as a sacrament which should be based on love, looks to the conjugal act as an expression of love. And since this embrace is in the nature of the closest of intimacies, everyone understands that it demands unity of the couple. We have spoken of that before. But it is essential to be convinced of it on account of the objections that come up frequently in conversations and the arguments advanced by certain modern authors like Blum, Montherlant, or Lawrence. This last mentioned writer gives us a scene like the following:

Jack who is married to Monica by whom he has several children makes advances to Mary.

“Oh, Jack! You are married to Monica.”

“Am I? But she doesn’t belong entirely to me; she has her babies now. I shall love her again when she is free. Everything in season, even women. Now I love you after going for a long time without ever thinking of you. A man is not made for a single affair.”

“O God,” she cried. “You must be crazy. You still love Monica.”

“I shall love Monica again later. Now I love you. I don’t change, but sometimes it is the one, sometimes it is the other. Why not?”

Yes, Why not? Simply because the rule as regards marriage is not the mere caprice of man and the

satisfaction of his sensual desires; because woman has a right to respect and to the pledge that has been given her; because marriage is made not for the individual but for the family, the social unit, and to carry on in such a fashion is the breakdown of the family.

But Jack—or rather Lawrence—hears nothing of all that.

“Mary, all alone, was incomplete. All women are but parts of a complete thing when they are left to themselves . . . They are but fragments . . . All women are but fragments.”

Where does such a theory originate if not in the unbounded sensuality of man? But Jack listens to nothing. What do judgments other than his own mean to him? As he said, “He hated the thought of being closed up with one woman and some youngsters in one house. No, several women, several houses, groups of youngsters; a camp not a home! Some women, not one woman. Let the world’s conventions be ignored. He was not one of those men for whom one woman was enough.”

Why doesn’t the logic of sensuality accord woman what man so brutally claims for himself? Are there two Moral Laws?

Here is another character, Helen. She is a doctor’s wife and his most devoted assistant. But she divorces him for a snob whose life is all race horses and receptions. There she is, soaked in worldliness. She gets another divorce to marry a young poet, the latest rage, and transforms herself into an intellectual . . . Marvelous richness of the feminine soul! Says your sophisticate, she is like a fountain of glistening water which catches its coloring, green, red, or blue according to the men she chooses in turn!

Are we dreaming? That’s the kind of thing we are likely to hear in certain gatherings and cocktail parties.

What a profanation of love!

Complete oblivion of the significance of the conjugal act! It is not only two distinct physical acts, but, through the medium of the body, a most ineffable exchange between two souls.

MARRIAGE AND THE EUCHARIST (3)

MARRIAGE as a sacrament that should be based on love in the beginning and that must foster love in those who receive it together expects the mutual presence of a respectful and devoted cohabitation. From the very nature of marriage there devolves the duty of union and of procreation.

Marriage requires still more . . . mutual sacrifice. And here again its similarity to the Eucharist is remarkable.

Our Lord instituted the Eucharist not only to give us His Presence, not only to provide us with the benefits of Holy Communion. Rich though these benefits be, they do not constitute the culminating benefit. What is the great wealth of the Eucharist?

On Calvary, Our Lord offered Himself all alone to His Father. But by His sacrifice He merited for us the grace to be grafted on Him. Stretched upon the bloody Arbor of Calvary Christ’s Hands and Feet and Side were cruelly notched; through the benefits of these divine openings we have gained the privilege, we wild offshoots since the time of Adam, branches deprived of divine life, to be set, to be grafted to the single Vine, the only Possessor of sanctifying sap.

Made other Christs that day, all Christians . . . Christiani . . . received the power, each time that the Lord Christ Jesus would repeat His sacrificial oblation of Calvary through the hands of His priest for the glory of the Father and the salvation of the world, to offer it with Him. This repetition of that offering is the Mass. Jesus, the divine Mediator, assumes again His attitude of Mediator; held between heaven and earth by the hands of the priest, He reiterates the dispositions of the complete immolation of Calvary.

On Golgotha, He was alone to carry through the sacrifice, the bloody sacrifice. Having been made that day by Him into Christ, we, since we are inseparable from Him except by sin, have the mission, whenever Christ renews His oblation, to offer it and to offer ourselves to Him. Effective participation in Mass is to be united with the Divine Head and all members of the Mystical Body in the intimacy of the same oblation renewed.

Jesus brings to us the benefits of His very own sacrifice; we bring to Him the offering of our own sacrifice. It is this part of the offering that the martyr's relic in the altar stone and the drop of water into the wine at the Offertory represent; the union of two sacrifices in the unity of the same sacrifice.

Marriage will have to reach heights like that to succeed in satisfying the utmost demands of love. The husband must be ready to sacrifice all for his wife; the wife must be ready to sacrifice all for her husband. From these conjoined sacrifices, love is made; love likewise demands these conjoined sacrifices.

What shall I do to show my wife that I love her? What fine deed can I accomplish, what prowess display, what humble, noble act perform? That is the spirit of chivalry.

And the wife: What shall I do to make my husband happy? What will give him pleasure?

This is the nourishment and the condition of love, the relish for mutual sacrifice.

MARRIAGE AND SACRIFICE

IT IS not only the highest Catholic doctrine which requires the spirit of sacrifice of the married couple but more immediate common experience.

To live mutually in the closest proximity, in constant forgetfulness of self so that each of the two thinks only of the other requires something more than mere human attraction.

"Do not believe those who tell you that the road of love offers only the softest moss for your feet to tread. There are some sharp pebbles on the trail blazed by Adam and Eve."

The married woman who wrote those lines in verse, said the same thing in prose, a prose strangely poetic:

"To enter into marriage with the idea that someday they will be rid of self is like putting a moth into a piece of wool. Whatever may be the embroidery, the gold threads, the rich colors, the piece of wool is destined to be eaten, chewed with holes and finally completely devoured. It would be necessary for two saints to marry to be sure that no bitter word would ever be exchanged between them; even then it is not predictable what misunderstandings might crop up. Did not Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas have to separate because they had too many altercations? Then, can these two unfortunate children of Adam and Eve destined to struggle in life with all that life brings in our days of recurring difficulties expect never to have any temptations to wound each other and never to succumb to such provocations?"

If marriage is difficult even when the husband is a saint and the wife is a saint, how can we estimate the sacrifices it will require when the couple are to put it briefly but “poor good Christians.”

Here however we are discussing the case of two who are sustained by dogma, morals, and the sacraments. But suppose one of the couple is a sort of pagan, or if baptized, so far removed from his baptism that nothing recalls any longer the mark of the children of God. What a secret cause for suffering!

Such was the suffering of Elizabeth Leseur who was happy in her married life in the sense that her husband was completely loyal to her but unhappy in her home because on the fundamental point for union, there was disunion, a separated life, the wife being Christian to the degree of astonishing intimacy with God and the husband remaining perfectly satisfied with the superficial life of so-called society.

Even when souls live in closest harmony, there will always be, even in the best of homes, a hidden cause for mutual suffering, which one author calls, “the eternal tragedy of the family, due to the fact that man and woman represent two distinct worlds whose limits never overlap.” For woman love is everything. For man it is but a part of life. The woman’s whole life rotates about the interior of the home, unless necessity forces her to work to earn a livelihood. The husband lives whole days much more outside the home than in it; he has his business, his office, his store, his shop, his factory. Except for the early days of his married life, he is absorbed more by ambition than by love; in any case, his heart alone is not busy throughout his days, but also and frequently more often, his head.

Sometimes the wife suffers from not having her husband sufficiently to herself; the husband suffers because he appears not to be devoting himself sufficiently to his wife. Over and above other causes of tragedy, here is the eternal and hidden drama. Much virtue is needed by both to accept the suffering they unwittingly cause each other.

A MYSTIC MORAL BOND

ASIDE from the helps of Faith, two things especially can aid the married couple to practice mutual forbearance and to accept the sacrifices inherent in life together.

The first is the fact of their mutual share in the birth of their progeny.

Saint Augustine speaks beautifully of the two little arms of a child which draw the father and mother more closely together within the circle of their embrace as if to symbolize the living bond of union the child really is between them. Even when one’s choice of a marriage partner has been perfect, when ardent tenderness is evinced on both sides, there can still develop a period of tenseness and strained relations. Who can best reconcile the two souls momentarily at odds, upset for a time, or somewhat estranged?

The child.

Someone has said it well: “Life is long, an individual changes in the course of ten, fifteen, twenty years shared with another. If the couple that has a had a fall out, has known love in its fullness. I mean by that the love of hearts and souls above all..., if the two have the noble and deep memories which constitute our true nourishment during our voyage on earth, if they are above all bound together by the children that their love has brought into the world, then there is a good chance that even though

they are caught by the undertow of passion, they will emerge safe and sound." In addition to having children . . . that bond of love between the father and mother even in the greatest stress and strain . . . what most contributes to a speedy reconciliation after the clashes that eventually arise or the misunderstandings which set them at odds is the thought that they must endure, they must remain together.

What is to be thought of the following practice which is becoming quite customary? In the preparation of the trousseau, only the bride's initial is engraved on the silverware or embroidered on the linen. Does it not seem to be a provision for the possibility of a future separation?

By the constant repetition of the idea that man is fickle and that "her husband is the only man a woman can never get used to," the novel, the theater, the movies, set the stamp of approval on the "doctrine" of the broken marriage bond as something normal, something to be expected.

"On the contrary," says Henriette Charasson, who is a married woman and an author quoted before, "if husbands and wives realized that they were united for life, if they knew that nothing could permit them to establish another family elsewhere, how vigilant they would be not to let their precious and singular love be weakened; how they would seek, throughout their daily ups and downs, to keep vibrant, burning, and radiant, the love which binds them not only by the bond of their flesh but by the bond of their soul."

We must thank God if He has blessed our home by giving us many precious children; thank Him also for the Christian conviction which we received formerly in our homes, convictions which will never permit us to consider the possibility of the least fissure in our own family now.

A FATHER'S ANSWER TO HIS DAUGHTER

IN THE book *"My Children and I"* by Jerome K. Jerome, which is as full of humor as of common sense, a young girl tells her father that she is frightened at the possibility of love's brevity.

"Love," she says, "is only a stratagem of nature to have fun at our expense. He will tell me that I am everything to him. That will last six months, maybe a year if I am lucky, provided I don't come home with a red nose from walking in the wind; provided he doesn't catch me with my hair in curlers. It is not I whom he needs but what I represent to him of youth, novelty, mystery. And when he shall be satisfied in that? . . ."

Her father answers, "When the wonder and the poetry of desire shall be extinguished what will remain for you will be what already existed before the desire. If passion alone binds you, then God help you! If you have looked for pleasure only, Poor You! But if behind the lover, there is a man (let us add a Christian); if behind this supposed goddess, sick with love, there is an upright and courageous woman (again let us add Christian); then, life is before you, not behind you. To live is to give not to receive. Too few realize that it is the work which is the joy not the pay; the game, not the points scored; the playing, not the gain. Fools marry, calculating the advantages they can draw from marriage, and that results in absolutely nothing. But the true rewards of marriage are called work, duty, responsibility. There are names more beautiful than goddess, angel, star, and queen; they are wife and mother.

Marriage is a sacrifice. To live these four last words, it is not enough to have started off on good footing, to be enthusiastic about fine ideals, and to put all hope in mutual tenderness.

Since marriage calls for more than ordinary sacrifice, it will be necessary in order to remain faithful to the habit of sacrifice, to have more than ordinary helps.

We have already meditated on the similarity between the Eucharist and marriage; we have seen that not only is there a bond of resemblance between these two sacraments but that there is in the Eucharist, above all in participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice and in Holy Communion a singular help for the married.

Prayer together must also be a help. Someone has rightly said, "The greatest sign of conjugal love is not given by encircling arms in an embrace but by bended knees in common prayer.

In his "Confessions," Saint Augustine describes his last evening with his mother at Ostia. It is worth quoting. When a husband and wife have reached such a degree of soul-union in God, they can face all life's tempests without trembling.

"Forgetting the past and looking toward the future, we pondered together in Your Presence, O my God, the living Truth, on what the eternal life of the elect would be like. . . . We came to this conclusion: The sensible pleasures of the flesh in their most intense degree and in all the attractiveness that material things can have, offer nothing that can compare with the sweetness of the life beyond, nor do they even deserve mention. In a transport of love, we tried to lift ourselves to You...."

I must understand more clearly than in the past how essential it is to be rooted in prayer and if possible in prayer together.

I will meditate on this again.

TRANSPORTED TOGETHER

WE ARE not considering the word "transported" in its emotional and rapturous sense, not as a paroxysm of exaltation, but rather in the sense of an ascent in a vehicle toward a determined destination.

Marriage is a trip for two. A trip. They travel ahead, enjoying mutual happiness on earth even as their destination gets nearer; and farther on, over there, up yonder, they shall both have the happiness of paradise.

Do I have my destination, our common destination, sufficiently before my eyes . . . sanctity here below, then death; then in the next life, the reward for our mutual efforts on earth?

How quickly we slip along hardly noticing our advance; I am scarcely aware of having started on the way. How distant the end seems; it escapes my sight; I am all taken up with what is right before me; I can't see the forest for the trees.

Am I advancing? In sanctity? In union with God? In patience? In purity? In charity? In generosity?

How many questions? Am I really asking them of myself? And if I am, how must I answer them if I want to be honest?

But I am not alone. This is a trip in company with others. We are several; we are two not counting the children. How do I conduct myself toward this company, my co-travelers?

How do I act toward the partner of my life?

A recent "before and after" cartoon gave a series of pictures indicating changes in attitude toward one's life companion:

During the engagement period, the young man is holding the umbrella very solicitously over his fiancée's head with no regard for the rain pouring down on him. Shortly after marriage, he holds the umbrella between them so that each receives an equal share of the raindrops. A long time later in marriage, the husband is no longer concerned about his wife; he holds the umbrella over his head and lets his wife get soaked to saturation.

Is that a reality or only an accusation? Selfishness so quickly regains its empire. It is not always bad will; inattention, perhaps, plain and simple. Yes, but isn't even that too bad?

What happened to all the little attentions of courtship and the honeymoon days? Those countless delicate considerations? The constant thought of the other?

There is the root of much suffering especially for the wife who is keener, more affectionate, more sensitive; she thinks she is cast off. She lets it be known on occasions. Oh, not bluntly, but with that subtle art she has for allusions, implications, and expressive silences. She might upbraid: "If you were in such a situation, if you were with such and such a person, I am sure you would be so obliging, so engaging, so attentive. But it is only I. Consequently you don't have to bother, isn't that so?" And, little by little, bitterness creeps in. It was nothing at all to start with. They made something— matter for friction.

I know a priest who wanted to preserve until he was at least eighty all the freshness of his priesthood: "I shall never let myself get used to celebrating Holy Mass." I should be able to say the same thing in regard to the sacrament I have received, the sacrament of marriage: "I will preserve my love in all its freshness. I shall remain considerate, delicately attentive. I shall do everything in my power to travel forward together not only in peace but in light and mutual joy.

SINGLE THOUGH TWO

ANNA DE NOAILLES, a French poetess, summed up her unhappy married life in the words, "I am alone with someone.

It is an expressive but sinister remark.

People marry in order to be two, but two in one, not to continue to be alone, alone although with someone. Aloneness for two can have a double cause:

Waiting too long to have children through a mutual agreement at the beginning of married life.

Loving each other too much perhaps. Too much, selfishly of course. Man and wife united, together, yes; and in this sense, it is not the solitude of which Anna de Noailles spoke. But if their union for two deserves rather to be called selfishness for two, it is not a true union.

These are the reefs upon which many a marriage has been wrecked.

Granted that if they do nothing to prevent generation, they do not sin . . . at least not against the law of chastity for marriage; but besides going counter to the law of fecundity, they are running the risk of sterility.

If they wait too long to have their brood, the nest hardens, loses its softness and adaptability. They get so accustomed to being only two that the presence of a third, even though the fruit of their union, does not seem desirable. There will always be time later, later! Let us enjoy each other first.

Selfishness for two: conjugal solitude. And let us add, a risk for later on. The wife will probably suffer from not being able to be a mother; the husband gets used to seeing in her only a wife. “It is in springtime,” the proverb picturesquely says, “that the father bird learns to do his duty.” The wife is very imprudent if she lets her husband prolong unduly a sort of bachelorhood; let her teach him how to assume his duties without too much delay.

There can be another reason more harmful still for this being alone though two and that is born of opposition of characters.

Generally it does not appear in the first years of married life. Everything is marvelous then, sunshine and moonlight.

Though there may be exceptions, they are rare.

But there comes a time when tension creeps in, more or less restrained, then hidden resentment, finally opposition if not with weapons at least by tongue lashings, sullen silences, disagreeable attitudes. There is in every man, even a married man the stuff of an old bachelor; in every woman, even a married woman, something of . . . well, a person shouldn’t really use that word to speak of unmarried women.

When husbands and wives notice their rising irritability, they should take hold of their hearts with both hands so to speak and refrain from words they will regret soon after. If they have the courage, let them have an understanding with each other as soon as possible. They should learn not to notice every little thing; to forget with untiring patience all the little pricks; to remember only the joys they lived through together; to make a bouquet of them, not a faded bouquet like dried out artificial flowers that are kept in a drawer, but alive and fresh, beautiful enough to be put in full view on the mantelpiece.

Everything that is typical of the single life is taboo. They are united. They are to remain united. Two in one. In one: It is not always easy; it is always necessary.

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